

## **RESISTANCE FACTORS TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN SUMATRA INDONESIA**

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**ABSTRACT.** This study aims to examine conceptual and empirical evidence about the perceptions of local community consisting of residents and small and medium entrepreneurs engaged in tourism in Northern Sumatra Indonesia. This study will review, assess, and identify the obstacles that are detrimental to community participation and successful tourism development in a given destination. Community development is part of tourism development of any destination. It has become a priority of relevant authorities to achieve sustainable development goals through tourism development. This review, moreover, will discuss how community participation and development can promote sustainable development of tourism. Discussion has focused on the inhibition factors such as the opportunities for cooperation with successful entrepreneurs; entrepreneurial and job opportunities, entrepreneurship and involvement in promoting of local products. This study investigated local residents as the sampling unit. The data has been analyzed using statistical methods through SPSS. The results depict that community participation in terms of entrepreneurial collaboration among population and product development have significant effect on development of tourism destination. It is recommended that a comprehensive study should be carried out in greater depth.

**Keywords:** community participation, sustainable tourism development, barriers to participation.

**JEL Classification:** M14, Q01, Z32

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## Introduction

Emergence of community participation is based on involving local communities in selection, design, and implementation of programs that will enrich life. The problem of tourism industry in northern Sumatra is related to issue of participation of local people in development of tourism in a destination. Tourism can be sustained if the tourism product is displayed in harmony with the local environment specifically involving community development. In this way local communities will get benefits of tourism revenue and tourism products. This, therefore, may make local community feel tourism activities as part of their life. However entrepreneurial opportunities exist in every dimension of community participation including economic, social and ecological, in conjunction with community development. According to Line (2012) and Myung et al. (2012) application of the concept of sustainable tourism still has not received full attention by stakeholders. Problems arise in sustainable tourism development by not taking into account needs of the local population which is outcome of non-involvement of local people in the process of tourism development. Usually local residents are considered inefficient in doing jobs that are created during the development of tourism. There are suggestions that participation of local communities provide many business opportunities. As a result, business opportunities and job opportunities are available in all dimensions and elements in tourism development aimed at local communities.

Collaboration with local residents in tourism development is very limited because it has been said and believed that local residents do not possess professional skills so as to qualify them as collaborating partners. Community participation to promote local products is limited at local level only. It is further said and believed that local communities do not possess capital and professional skills to promote tourism. As a result of

local products and services without being in line with global standards, the attractiveness of tourism destination is not promoted as desired. On the other hand social problems also arise in this process from religious and cultural factors when local communities are not included in the work of producing and marketing products containing values of religion and culture. Similarly, during development process, ecology problems arise when local residents themselves do not get involved in control and conservation of ecology in the area of tourism destination. This, in fact, gives rise to the opinion stating that local community is catalyst for ecological damage. These contrary views lead to two opinions about role of community participation in development of tourism destination. On one hand, local community is of the view that they have been excluded from the mainstream of development due to lack of participation from the initial planning to the implementation stage. On the hand, it is of the view that the locals are not ready to participate in tourism development process, face the challenges and take advantage of existing opportunities within their limited resources. Given this backdrop, this study seeks to focus on barriers to community participation in sustainable tourism destination development.

## **Literature Review**

The objective to create sustainable tourism development based on community participation need a lot of effort and passions and ability to turn objectives into realized achievement (Butler, 1975). Smith (1988) and Britton (1989) argue tourism does not need to have a theoretical framework, because tourism phenomenon does not have complex problems in social and cultural fields. In his study of development of tourism community in Australia, Simpson (2008) stated that the idea underlying community participation in tourism is based on proposition that without community involvement, development will fail. The idea of community involvement in tourism development is based on two insights. First, appropriate behaviors of the population in terms of supportive attitude, mindset and values as well as their knowledge should prevail. Second, the community participation should evolve to change from weakness to strength of tourism development and be able to stand on its own. This is

called a transformational investment (Simpson, 2008; Conyers, 1991). While Conyers (1991) in his study on community participation in tourism in New York elaborated that community involvement in tourism development is important because it is a means to obtain information about circumstances, attitudes, expectations and needs of the community at tourism destination.

Without presence of community in the tourism development, goals of sustainable development may not be realized. Shunnaq *et al* (2008), in their study in Jordan, argued that community engagement in development of tourism promotes sense of togetherness. The study mentions that involvement of a simple way to include local community in development of tourism and investment can positively influence people in a number of ways. This may include receiving income from abroad, an increase of regional income, job creation and preservation of tourism resources. In accordance with these findings, Sammeng (2000) states that concept of community development should be applied starting from planning stage in the area to the national scheme. According to Mikkelsen (1999) community participation can be achieved through investment in transformational and instrumental social capital. Through transformational community participation, weak state can be converted into a strong and independent one. This can be done with the idea to engage community in development of tourism destination. Through instrumental community participation, a sense of engagement is created among important actors of population during development of tourism. Ambar (2004) urged that local community may be involved from planning to implementation of tourism development program.

However, according to Franco (2010), Gamal (1997) and Gilbert (1995) there are also challenges in community participation. First, how the community should be involved so that the right resources come from the people, by the people and for the people. Second, how community involvement can be an alternative approach to replace the traditional centralized and top-down approach. The study by Gibbon, Labonte & Lavarack (2002) in Jordan noted that participation and development of community is an important concept in study of sustainable tourism. It is because success of tourism development will depend on ability and willingness of the community in planning and conducting tourism activities.

In line with this, study by Kwan (2003) states that local economic development should be in response to community development through community collaboration. This must be achieved by introduction of strategy of tourism destinations based on promotion of tourism as community based. Community-based tourism cannot be separated from concept of sustainable development because economic development may achieve long-term sustainability through collaboration of multiple stakeholders from local community (Dodds, 2012).

In addition to social inclusion and cultural sensitivity, concept of sustainability also includes environmental management and resource depletion rates which are certainly related with basic concepts of tourism and community participation (Hunter, 1997; Cevat, 2010). According to Jose Goldemberg (2007), community development refers to human life in present and future, and ideas about limitations of resources. This in turn is affected by technology, social organization and ability to meet needs of present and future generations. Traditional concept of development does not consider continuity of development in future. Gunn (1994), states the development of tourism business is not merely intended to identify some of the greatest possible advantages for investors, but more to do with impact of tourism to public and environmental resources. This form of tourism is born out of a community based strategy to strengthen the capacity of local community organizations. For sustainable tourism, it must involve local communities as part of tourism product. Industry must involve local communities in decision-making because they are the ones who will ultimately bear cumulative effect of tourism development.

Community participation should be seen as a tool to preserve unity and competitive ability of tourism products. But the challenge is that despite emergence of concept of community participation, development planning of tourism destination remains focused on commercial interests with very little community involvement. Purpose of tourism development planning should be focused more on conservation and development efforts for uniqueness and attractiveness of local community (Elliott, 1999). Study by David and Langdon (2007) describes a way to build community and to achieve goal of environmental sustainability by providing opportunities for communities to come forward with idea and commitment.

Based on above review, this study establishes a framework of community participation that inhibits sustainable tourism development at a destination as depicted in Figure 1.1.

In this framework, there are five specific elements of major concern to be made part of development of community-based sustainable tourism as mentioned below.

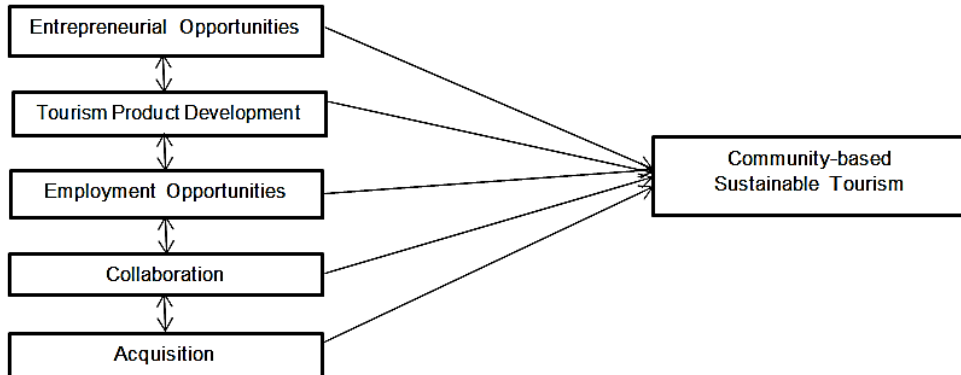
1. Opportunities for entrepreneurship
2. Tourism product substitution/promotion
3. Employment opportunities
4. Opportunities for cooperation
5. Acquisition of foreign companies

Based on above elements, the framework further suggests key tourism sub-sectors that require strategic response by policymakers as described below.

1. Central line of transportation networking
2. Hospitality services
3. The construction of a specific tourism market
4. The presentation of the local cultural heritage
5. Diversification and product handling
6. Investment and local employment
7. Community participation in business partnerships
8. Collaboration and integration of all relevant elements.

The basis of sustainable tourism development is to meet needs of tourists and local community in present and future; to adapt local resource on an on-going basis, preserve cultural, ecological processes and animal diversity, and life support systems (WSSD, 2002; WTO, 2000 WTO and EC, 1998; WT & TC, 1997). This view is in line with the principles of community development process i.e. it may not impair needs of local population and must be continuous.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1.1.** Proposed conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

This study has focused on examining the extent of community participation in tourism development. In particular it seeks to examine participation of community in economic, social and ecological processes. This participation should be along the elements of collaboration, promotion of tourism products, destination development, preservation of religion and culture, human resources, ecological quality, continuous development of quality to ensure sustainable development of tourism. Barriers to sustainable tourism development can be assessed through a number of elements such as community participation, entrepreneurship opportunities, job opportunities and collaboration. To evaluate the relationship between various elements of sustainable tourism destination development, the study adopted survey method of data collection using questionnaire. Survey research method was employed to obtain data directly from respondents using questionnaires as a data collection instrument. Their response to the questions enabled analysis of relationship among study variables. Target population in this study has been local population in three villages located in

tourism destination namely Regensi Langkat, Karo, and Simalungun. Sample drawn from each village were 100 to make it total 300 respondents. Demographic characteristics of respondents were used to categorize them based on seven criterion namely gender, residence status, monthly income level, age group, education level, marriage status, occupation. Sample respondents were selected by using simple random sampling technique. Responses obtained from distribution of questionnaire were used in analysis phase of study using descriptive statistics, regression analysis and tests of significance (Erlina, 2008; Hamid in Erlina, 2008; Walle, 1997; Bryman, 1989; Tyrell, 1984; Moser et al., 1971).

## Discussion

The mean of responses of all variables is presented in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1.**  
Means and SD of Variables

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Average Means</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Economy	Collaboration	2.43	1.21
	Product promotion	2.46	1.23
Social	Religious and culture	2.40	1.17
	Human resource development	2.87	1.37
Ecology	Quality	2.54	1.24
	Continuous development	2.11	0.96
Sustainable Development	Community participation	3.07	1.31
	Entrepreneurial opportunities	2.85	1.33
	Employment opportunities	3.05	1.34
	Cooperative	2.85	1.33
	Quality development	2.89	1.33



The mean values of elements of economic, social and ecological dimensions of tourism development are closer to score 2.50. This value indicates that respondents tend to disagree with the statements measured using a five points Likert scale. These indicators used an interval scale by Walle (1997). The decision value of the average score are namely: (<2.50 = less); (2:51 to 3:49 = average); (> 3.50 = good). The results depict that not all elements and dimensions of development are included in the community participation. Furthermore, the results of table 1.2 with significance level of 0.05 depict that there are elements of development dimensions which are not reflective of community participation.

**Table 1.2.**

Dimensions of Community-based Development Related with Sustainable Tourism Development

<b>Dimensions of Community-based Development</b>	<b>Elements of Sustainable Tourism Development</b>				
	Commu- nity partici- pation	Entrepre- neurial Opportu- nity	Employ- ment Opportu- nity	Coope- ration	Quality Dev.
<b>Collaboration</b>	0.01	0.92	0.00	0.37	0.99
<b>Product promotion</b>	0.02	0.36	0.07	0.62	0.33
<b>Destination Dev.</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Religious /culture</b>	0.73	0.76	0.19	0.95	0.62
<b>Human resource</b>	0.19	0.26	0.98	0.14	0.26
<b>Quality development</b>	0.03	0.64	0.00	0.28	0.00
<b>Continuous development</b>	0.08	0.42	0.03	0.12	0.81

Source: Adapted from SPSS. sig. > Value  $\alpha$  0.05 per degree of reliability of 95%

Based on results in Table 1.2, it is concluded that 5 out of 7 dimensions of community-based tourism development have been found significantly related to element of community participation in sustainable development of tourism. Community collaboration relates significantly with the elements of community participation and employment opportunities but does not relate significantly to entrepreneurial opportunities, cooperation and quality development. Product promotion is significantly

related with community participation but not with other elements of sustainable tourism development. Destination development relates significantly with all elements of dependent variable dimensions. Quality Development dimension of community-based tourism significantly relates with community participation, employment and quality development but does not relate significantly to other elements such as entrepreneurial opportunities and cooperation. Continuous development relates significantly with the elements of employment but not with other four elements. The dimensions of religion/culture and human resources have been found not related with elements of sustainable tourism.

## **Conclusion**

Positive community participation will lead to earning revenues from an increase in national income, employment and tourism resource conservation as has been proposed by many researchers. Sustainable tourism concept based on community participation can be applied in planning and implementation of tourism development at local, regional or national level as postulated by Shunnaq (2008). However, the results of low scores on means and strength of each variable depicts a steady resistance factor as perceived by the community.

The element of community participation exists in collaboration, tourism product development/promotion, destination development, ecological quality, and quality of sustainable development to provide economic functionality. But there is no element of community participation prevailing in religious/cultural and human resources. Tourism provides an opportunity for the community to do business. Whether that business is related to tourism depends on the creativity of entrepreneurs, both large and small, to provide services or product offering to the tourists. It is important that tourism is preserved and enhanced as an economic driver for local economy. Tourism development should be planned and managed in a sustainable way to enhance and conserve natural environment and eco system as well as ensure economic and social well-being of all residents; and attract visitors with shared values.

This study suggests that a total new approach to community participation is inevitable as little information has been obtained about the capability and ability of the residents. Welch & Mann (2001) have suggested that new information is important in trying to explain opportunities and challenges. By including technological changes, political pressure, macro environmental factors and social trends it can be helpful for local entrepreneurs to obtain and combine resources to generate greater worth. Political and policy changes can be source of entrepreneurial opportunities because these changes allow combining resources in new ways and thus becoming more productive. Conyers (1991) suggests that community involvement in tourism is very important. Community participation is a useful tool to get information about attitudes, expectations, and needs of the community. Without presence of local community, the development program for tourism destination will most probably be destined to fail. Thus, ability to reduce the resistance factors will encourage more community participation in future.

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