

## Barriers to Community Participation Toward Tourism Development in Shiraz, Iran

Fariborz Aref and Ma'rof B Redzuan

Faculty of Human Ecology, University of Putra, Malaysia

**Abstract:** This study deals with concept of community participation, which originates in the developed world. In particular, it analyses and explains the barriers to community participation for tourism development in the context of Shiraz, Iran. It was found that there are operational, structural and cultural barriers to community participation in the tourism development in local communities in Shiraz; although, they do not equally exist in every community and while, these barriers tend to exhibit higher intensity and greater persistence in the new district of Shiraz. The tourism industry in most developing countries is faced with barriers and constraints. It is the intention of this study to bring discussion to barriers of community participation in tourism development. A lack of community participation has been identified as important barriers to effective tourism development in third world countries especially in Iran. In this way, I review literature on the barriers of community participation and discuss the related concepts of community participation, with particular attention to how they may apply to tourism development. Then I illustrate its barriers in Shiraz city. The study applies a visual representation to analyze the context of how local people have participated in tourism development.

**Key words:** Community participation, tourism development, community development, barriers of community participation

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### INTRODUCTION

The concept of "community participation" is regarded as a tool to assist in tourism and local development in rural communities (Sebola and Fourie, 2006). Community participation has become an umbrella term for supposedly new genre of development intervention (Tosun, 2000). Community participation is the heart and core of community development and one of the element tourism development. Community participation is a necessary condition for the development and maintenance of effective, community development based tourism development. Tourism and community development have increasingly placed an emphasis on sustainability. Community participation has become an important opportunity for community development (Fariborz and Ma'rof, 2008). Community participation also presents a challenge to tourism development, as it often requires an investment of time and energy to build the community capacity to understand and respond to a given tourism problem. We expect that community participation will become a central component of tourism development. Community participation can be seen as a process whereby the residents of a community are given a voice and a choice to participate in issues affecting their lives (Theron, 2005). These scholars have made substantial contributions to studies of community participation in

tourism development (Haywood, 1988; Keogh, 1990; Reed, 1997; Simmons, 1994b). This study suggests that although, community participation in tourism development is highly desirable, there seems to be formidable operational, structural and cultural barriers to tourism development in Iran. It is the main aim of this study, to show these barriers of community participation toward tourism development in Shiraz, Iran. Moreover, this study will primarily focus on barriers to practicality of applying the community participation. Successful community participation in tourism development and their implementation requires overcoming barriers at structural operational and cultural level. At the structural level there is a need for professional support and commitment to tourism development and community participation, expert skills, human resources, resource dedication to support participation and an appropriate tourism development structure that is able to be responsive to local involvement. At the operational level a number of inputs are important to optimize the success of involving community in tourism development, namely political will and bureaucratic and political support, which has principles aligned with that of community participation, coordination, collaboration, communication, available information and administrative support (Tosun, 2000; Murray, 2004). At the cultural level there is a need for enthusiasm and increase awareness between local people.

This study reviews the concept of participation in tourism development and then presents barriers to community participation toward tourism development in Shiraz.

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

There are different interpretations, terms and processes used to understand community participation, consequently, a clear and commonly shared concept of community participation in tourism development is difficult to establish. However, the level of participant's influence or control of decision-making, actions and outcomes are often key to the descriptions of community participation (Murray, 2004). The definitions presented by various theorists have been presented in an effort to give a comprehensive overview of the term. Community participation can be seen as the mechanism of community development. It empowers the community to solve their own problems and stimulates self reliance among the community (JOICFP, 2000).

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM DEVELOPEMNT

It has been argued that community participation in tourism development is considered essential if it is to provide equitable distribution of local economic benefits. According to Kiss (2004), tourism can generate support for conservation among communities as long as they see some benefit. Community participation is an essential component in tourism development. Community participation as one aspect of the tourism development strategies found in tourism destinations. Ashley and Roe (1998) describe community participation as a spectrum from passive to active involvement to full participation, where, there is active community participation and

venture ownership. In this context, it is debated that community participation is an important factor for successful tourism development. Simmons (1994a) has argued that involvement of a community in the tourism development process is vital for the residents of destination. Brohman (1996) has advocated community participation in the tourism development as a tool to solve major problems of tourism in developing countries. He has contended that community participation in the tourism development will achieve more equal distribution of the benefits, discourage undemocratic decision-making and will meet the needs of local community in better way. The above theoretical arguments for community participation in tourism development seem to be interested; if applied, most of the problems of tourism development may be avoided.

### TYOLOGY OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Although, the Arnstein (1969) ladder of citizen participation and other models have been discussed; but they don't directly deal with tourism development (Leksakundilok, 2006). Therefore, this part attempted to establish a Typology of community participation in tourism development based on those models, each type of participation is described in Table 1.

**Barriers to community participation in tourism development:** Community participation is the heart and core of community development and one component of sustainable tourism development. However, community participation often faces barriers in tourism development (Moscardo, 2008; Steven and Jennifer, 2002). In theory, tourism can create better opportunities for achieving community participation, but the barriers on community

Table 1: Types of community participation in tourism development

Types	
Manipulation	Tourism development projects are generally developed by some powerful individuals, or government, without any discussion with the people community's leaders. The benefits go to some elite persons; the lower classes may not get any benefits, This level applies to most conventional community tourism areas (Amstein, 1969).
Informing	People are told about tourism development program, which have been decided already, in the community. The developers run the projects without any listening to local people's opinions (Amstein, 1969).
Consultation	People are consulted in several ways, e.g. involved in community's meeting or even public hearings. Developers may accept some contribution from the locals that benefits their project, e.g. surveying, local transportation and goods (Amstein, 1969).
Interaction	People have greater involvement in this level. The rights of local people are recognized and accepted in practice at local level. At this level, tourism is organized by community organizations, but receives limited support from government agencies (Pretty, 1995).
Partnership	Conciliation between developers and local people is developed in the participatory process. Local organizations elect the leaders to convey their opinion and negotiate with external developers. There are some degrees of local influence in the development process. The benefits may be distributed to the community in the form of collective benefits and jobs and income to the people (Amstein, 1969).
Empowerment	Empowerment is the highest rung of community participation, in which local people have control over all development without any external force or influence. The benefits are fully distributed in the community (Dewar, 1999; Choguill, 1996).
Self-mobilization	Local people may directly contact explorer tourists and develop tourism service by themselves. Some programs may be supported by NGOs that have had no involvement in the decision-making of the local community (Pretty, 1995).

Source: Leksakundilok (2006)

participation still exist are a barrier to the effectiveness of using tourism development for community development. Barriers to community participation toward tourism development have hardly been debated by scholars of tourism (Moscardo, 2008). Barriers to participation in the tourism development in developing countries may be analyzed under three main headings. A study conducted by Tosun (2000) suggests that there are operational, structural and cultural barriers to tourism development in many developing countries. It should be noted that such areas of barriers are not mutually exclusive. Although, there is no special reason beyond this classification, it is supposed that it will facilitate understanding of barriers to community participation in the tourism development, at least at a theoretical level.

**Operational barriers:** Tosun (2000) lists 3 major obstacles that planners are likely to meet when they decide to implement a participatory development approach. These obstacles include the centralization of public administration of tourism development, lack of coordination between involved parties and lack of information made available to the local people of the tourist destination (Murray, 2004).

**Structural barriers:** Structural barriers are usually associated with institutional, power structures, legislative and economic systems. Tosun (2000) describes a few of the relevant barriers below. Attitudes of professionals, lack of expertise, elite domination, lack of appropriate legal system, lack of trained human resources, relatively high cost of community participation and lack of financial resources (Murray, 2004; Steven and Jennifer, 2002; Tosun, 2000).

**Cultural barriers:** There seem to be some cultural factors include limited capacity of poor people to handle development effectively and apathy and low level of awareness in the local community and function as obstacles to participatory tourism development (Moscardo, 2008; Tosun, 2000).

## THE COMMUNITY RESEARCH

This study has done in Shiraz city, Shiraz is located at the distance of 990 km from Tehran, the capital of Iran. Shiraz is an ancient city that located in south of Iran. It is known as the city of poetry, wine and roses. It is also considered by many Iranians to be the City of Love due to the many gardens and fruit-trees that can be seen in the city. Shiraz is also, the city of an outstanding cultural and artistic life, which makes it an interesting tourist

destination so that is a city with long and interesting history. Shiraz has been selected by UNESCO as the first Iranian city to be registered in the list of UNESCO's city of literature (Heritage News Agency, 2006). Participants in this study was included the community leaders. One hundred seventy five key leaders from all local communities participated in the survey. Community leaders were chosen as the sample population for this survey, because they represent the voice of the people of concern (Eng and Parker, 1994). Key leaders are able to speak for the community because they have special knowledge of the community being studied because of their roles, in that community (Warheit *et al.*, 1978; Von Kroff *et al.*, 1992; Eyler *et al.*, 1999; Thompson *et al.*, 2000). So, based on studies (Eng and Parker, 1994; Eyler *et al.*, 1999; Thompson *et al.*, 2000) community leaders are an appropriate population for measuring community development or community change.

The study employed a well-established participatory approach that had been used elsewhere to build community capacity (Laverack, 2003, 2006) using eleven barriers that were categorized from an analysis of the literature (Moscardo, 2008; Tosun, 2000). Prior to implementation, the interpretation of each barrier was discussed and adapted in consultation with the community leaders to ensure that they were relevant within the context of Shiraz and the Project. An interpretation of each barrier is provided in Table 2. The participants were first asked to illustrate barriers of their community participation to address tourism development. To do this, they were provided between 11 statements for barrier. Each statement represented an item of the range between the least to the most barriers and had been adapted from a generic set of statements developed elsewhere. Participants answered to each statement base on five scales that most described the current situation in their community. The leaders decided to use 0-4 and this later provided the quantification for the visual representation of the spider-web configuration (Fig. 1).

Table 2: Barriers to community participation for tourism development in shiraz

Type of barriers	Mean (Min = 0/ Max = 4)
<b>Operational</b>	
Centralization of public administration in Tourism	1.95
Lack of information made available to the locals	3.01
Lack of coordination between involved parties	0.90
<b>Structural</b>	
Lack of expertise in participation techniques	3.34
Elite domination	0.78
Lack of appropriate legal system	1.09
Lack of trained human resources	3.27
Relatively high cost of participation	1.00
Lack of financial resources	3.63
<b>Cultural</b>	
Apathy	1.50
Low level of awareness in the local community	3.70

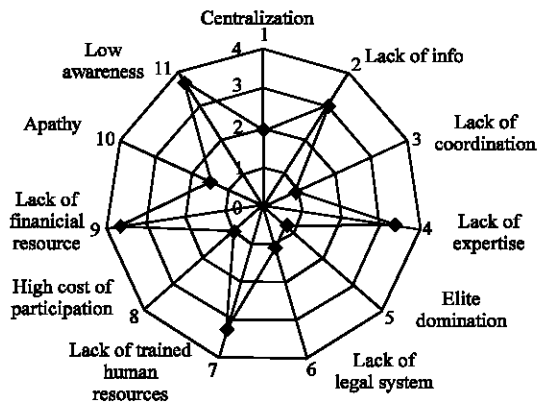


Fig. 1: Interpreting barriers of community participation for tourism development in Shiraz

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

An effective means of assessing the ability of community leaders to facilitate genuine community participation in the tourism development is to examine the barriers posed by these leaders. In this study I found 3 major barriers. Tosun (2000) suggests three major barriers to community participation in tourism development process: operational, structural and cultural. I have found that in Shiraz, all of these barriers are evident in tourism development; although they do not equally exist in every community. In terms of operational barriers, I found that all were obstacle for tourism development. The results of the study show some barriers as follows:

According to Table 2 structural barriers resulted from the retooling of the tourism industry in all local communities in Shiraz. There is a noticeable lack of expertise in tourism development. The other barriers such as elite domination, lack of an appropriate legal system and lack of trained human resources are factors that can be as important obstacle for community participation in tourism development. Cultural barriers are evidence of Shiraz's continuous socioeconomic problems. The spider web configuration in Fig. 1 provides a distribution of high and low ratings of the eleven barriers of community participation for tourism in the Shiraz communalities.

This Fig. 1 illustrate that the most important barriers to community participation in the Tourism development identified in this study is: Lack of information; lack of expertise; lack of financial resource, low level of awareness and lack of human resource. All these limitations and barriers are based on the socio-economic conditions of the communities. Therefore, the limitations and barriers are similar in each of the local communities. The findings of the analysis of the 175 case studies of tourism development also indicated that the most basic

barrier to effective tourism development was a lack of knowledge about tourism in general. This lack of tourism knowledge was a key element contributing to limited local tourism leadership, effective planning and coordination and involvement of local stakeholders.

### CONCLUSION

This study revealed the relevance of the process of community participation for tourism development. The study also, has identified and discussed the barriers to community participation towards tourism development. One major barriers identified by the study is that locals have restricted access to financial resources alongside other resources. This has implied that locals cannot negotiate access and they lack a sense of ownership to tourism resources. As a result communities in Shiraz lack the power to be active participants in tourism development. Consequently, the opportunity for community participation in tourism development is lost. Clearly, the described barriers may not be only specific to participatory tourism development strategy; some of them may also be seen as common problems of development and tourism development in general in many local communities in Iran. Hence, it should be accepted that these barriers may be an extension of the prevailing social, political and economic structure in Iran, which have prevented them from achieving a higher level of development. Several studies have already revealed that without creating opportunities for local people to take part in the decision-making process it would be very difficult for local communities to get adequate benefits from tourism development (Clancy, 1999; Tosun, 1998; Timothy, 1999). Hence, community participation in the tourism development in Shiraz cannot become much of reality unless specific and deliberate strategies at local, national levels are developed to tackle with the outlined barriers.

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