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# Local Community Involvement in Tourism: A Content Analysis of Websites of Wildlife Resorts

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## Abstract

Over the years, views on tourism have changed from pleasure seeking activity to a mere economic activity. Today, tourism is the major source of income and economic activity for developing countries. It generates employment, foreign exchange earnings, and also supports in development of infrastructure of the destination. Tourism may also have potential in addressing socio economic issues through sustainable tourism development. Local community participation in tourism activities has also become one of the major principles of sustainable tourism. Tourism is a people oriented industry and its major functions depend on human resources. Tourism is a major source of employment and it has all the capabilities in contributing towards the livelihood of the local community by providing employment and involving them in all kinds of tourism activities. The major objective of the study is to find out how local communities are involved in various activities and practices adopted by resorts for the development of the local community. The scope of the study is confined to wildlife resorts. Percentage analysis is used to analyze the data. Primary data was collected by analyzing websites of the resorts and the secondary data

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was collected by reviewing various articles on the local community involvement in tourism. The study also suggests few guidelines on how resorts can build linkages with local community, which will in turn lead to the development of both resorts and the local community.

**Keywords:** Local community, Tourism, Wildlife, Socio-economic

## **Introduction**

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the service Industry. From the international financial context, ten percent of the total revenue in the world economy has been generated from the tourism industry and ten percent of the world's workforce has also been generated from the tourism industry. These figures are expected to double by the year 2015, with an anticipated one billion tourists per year. So, tourism has enormous potential to contribute towards the growth of developing countries, particularly for local communities, where wildlife tourism exists (Ashley & Roe, 1998).

Today, tourism has become one of the major sources of income. It generates employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings, and supports the development of infrastructure in any destination. Compared to other sectors, tourism has the capacity to generate economic support even in remote areas. However, in several areas it has minimized economic benefits because of leakages (Ashley & Roe, 1998), which is a major threat to the growth of the industry.

Tourism can affect the lives of the local community in various ways. For some local community, tourism can be a driving force of the overall development, and for others it may cause negative impacts (Ashley & Roe, 1998) such as displacement of local people to make way for tourism facilities, depletion of local resources, increase in cost of living and commercialization of culture. The active involvement of local community in tourism activities is highly essential in order to increase the benefits of tourism, and to minimize the negative impacts.

## **Community Involvement in Tourism**

While considering the involvement of local community in tourism, it is essential to identify the communities that can actively be

engaged in tourism activities. According to Gilmour & Fisher (1991), “a community can be defined as a set of people with mutually recognized interest in the resources of a particular area rather than as people living in that area”. The above definition clearly states that a community, which is living in or adjacent to wildlife areas has to be considered and involved in the tourism activities.

The below table shows how a local community can be involved in the tourism sector

Table 1. Different forms of Community Involvement in Tourism

<b>Enterprise/ Institution Type</b>	<b>Nature of Local Involvement</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Private business run by an outsider	Employment Supply of goods and services	Kitchen Staff, Sales of food, building materials etc
Enterprises or Informal operational sector run by a local entrepreneur	Entrepreneurship, Self-employment, and Supply of goods and services	Craft Sales Set up, Food Outlet campsites, Ancillary services like, Guide, Home stays, Food, Fuel etc
Community Enterprises	Collective Ownership, Group or Individual Management, Employment or Contributed Labour	Community Camp Site, Art and Craft Centre, Cultural Hub
Joint venture between community and private sector	Contractual Commitments, Share in the revenues, Lease or Investment in resources, Participation in Decision Making Process	Income and Expenditure sharing with the local community on agreed terms, community leases/land/resources/c oncession to lodge, and community holds equity in lodge.
Tourism Planning Body	Consulting, Representing, Participation	Legal consultation in regional tourism planning, community representatives on tourism board

Source: Enhancing community involvement in wildlife tourism: issues and challenges (Vol. 11). IIED

Local community can be involved in various ways such as employment in tourism sector, local entrepreneurship, leasing out land for tourism, making partnership agreement with tourism operators, and participation in planning and decision making related to tourism, wildlife, parks and land uses (Ashley & Roe, 1998).

## **Review of Literature**

Various stakeholders such as private sector, government, civil societies and local people are involved in tourism development. Local communities play an important role in tourism development. They are regarded as legitimate and moral stakeholders in tourism development. Local community has to be involved in policy and decision making so that it will enhance the trust and confidence of the local people on the tourism industry. In order to improve plans and service delivery, local community involvement in decision making is very essential and it also promotes a sense of community involvement who share common goals. (Muganda, Sirima, & Ezra, 2013).

The success of rural tourism development depends on better community leadership, support and participation of local administrative systems, strategic plans, understanding, coordination and cooperation between business entrepreneurs and local leadership, support and participation of local administrative bodies, coordination and cooperation of local entrepreneurs, involvement in information supply and technical support, good convention and tourists bureaus and community support spread worldwide for tourism. Active participation of local community in tourism development is very important to achieve the goals of sustainability and to improve the welfare of the local community (Ertuna&Kirbas, 2012).

Community participation in tourism helps to uphold the local culture, tradition and indigenous knowledge of the local people. It also helps in conservation of the environment and culture of the local community. Community has to actively participate in involved working, meaningful decision making and representation in structured communities. The aim of community participation

should be in line with proper communication among the stakeholders in facilitating better decision making and sustainable growth and development (Aref, 2011).

The success of tourism development always depends on the good will and the cooperation of the local community. If local community aspirations and capabilities do not match with tourism development and planning, it may destroy the industry's potential. Local community involvement is generally considered as an important issue for the success of tourism projects. (Breugel, L, V, 2013).

## **Objectives**

The two major objectives of the study are

- To find out how local communities are involved in various activities in wildlife resorts.
- To find out the practices adopted by resorts for the development of local community.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Data Collection**

Primary data is collected by analyzing the websites of the resorts and secondary data is collected by reviewing various articles on local community involvement in tourism.

### **Scope of the Study**

The Scope of the study is confined to wildlife resorts.

### **Sample size**

The study is based on 20 wildlife resorts which were highlighted and projected by the National Geography website.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Percentage analysis is used to analyse the data

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Website is also one of the important sources through which resorts can create awareness about ecological sensitivity and sustainable practices. The websites of 20 resorts were analysed based on 8 criteria such as purchase from local community, promotion of local festivals, involvement in decision making, employment opportunities, promotion of local culture, environment awareness, education supports and practices adopted by resorts to uplift the local community such as conservation projects, medical facilities, infrastructure development etc.

Table 2 Local community involvement in wildlife resorts

Criteria	%	Frequency
Purchase from Local Community	42.9	9
Promotion of local festivals	9.5	2
Involvement in decision making	-	-
Employment opportunities	76.2	16
Promotion of local culture	42.9	9
Creating environmental awareness	33.3	7
Educational Support	76.2	16
Others	81	17

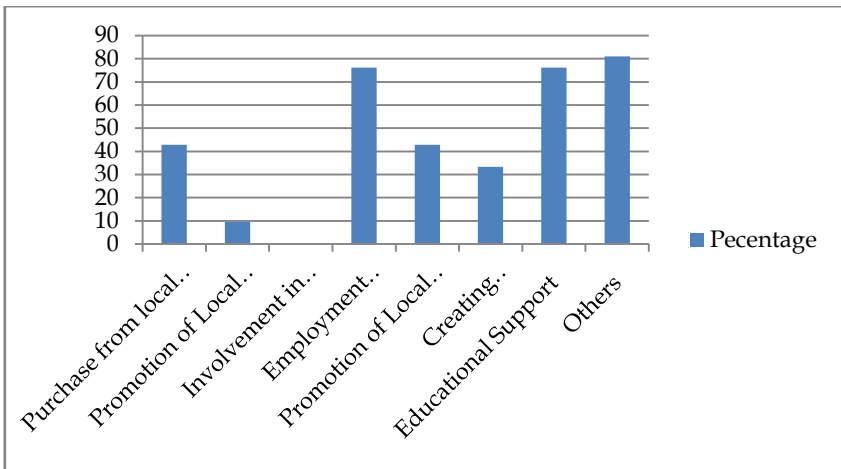


Fig.1 Local community involvement in wildlife resorts

The above table shows that 42.9% of wildlife resorts purchase products from local community. 9.5% of the wildlife resorts promote local festivals. None of the wildlife resorts involve local community in decision making. 76.2% of the wildlife resorts provide employment opportunities to the local people. 42.9% of the wildlife resorts promote local culture. 33.3% and 76.2% of the wildlife resorts create environmental awareness among local community and provide educational support to the local community respectively. 81% of the wildlife resorts adopted various practices such as conservation projects, development of local infrastructure, sustainable food projects, health and medical benefits, youth development projects, donations for the development of local community, community owned business, support to local craftsmen and artisans, workshops for the local community, participation in council initiative, and local sports team.

### **Findings of the Study**

According to the study wildlife resorts promotes local economy by purchasing products and by providing employment opportunities to the local community. Wildlife resorts fairly contribute for the development of local communities by adopting various practices and supporting education of the local children. Wildlife resorts donot give much importance to the promotion of local culture, local festival and creating environmental awareness among local community. The major finding is that none of the wildlife resorts consider the involvement of the local community in the decision making process.

### **Suggestions**

Wildlife Resorts have to develop a link with the local community by purchasing products from the local community, by employing local staff, and by supporting the development of local arts, crafts, cultural products so that it will benefit the wildlife resorts and help them to gain market advantage and improved products by offering authentic experiences to the guests. Wildlife resorts have to understand the challenges faced by the local communities in

meeting the requirements of the resorts. For instance, if the locally produced goods are not sufficient to meet the quality and quantity required by the wildlife resorts, the wildlife resorts have to stimulate communication with the local communities regarding their requirements. This will also benefit wildlife resorts in cost cutting since local goods and services are less expensive. More employment opportunities to the local people will boost the local economy and it will also benefit resorts as it enhances staff morale. Wildlife resorts have to promote local festivals and culture since culture is one of the unique products of tourism and it offers an authentic experience to the guests. Since many reviews support local community involvement in decision making, it is very much essential to consider involvement of local community in decision making processes

## Conclusion

The major principle of sustainable tourism is involvement of local people and local community in tourism activities. To develop tourism, local community participation is very essential. Local food, local culture and festivals are add-on products to tourism and it also provides authentic experiences to the tourists. Indigenous knowledge of the local community helps in the conservation of environment and local culture. Wildlife resorts have to take initiatives for the overall development of the local community by involving them, both in internal and external activities of the resorts since they are also stakeholders of the environment in which the resort is located.

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