**A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING PEOPLE’S INVOLVEMENT IN PRO-POOR TOURISM**

***K. Shanmuganatahan \*, N. Abeysekera, L.P.S. Gamini, K.P.L. Chandralal***

*Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Vocational Technology, University College of Jaffna*

**INTRODUCTION**

Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) is a kind of tourism enterprise in which the local poor people are the key stakeholders. Sustainable tourism can be ensured through People’s Involvement (Thammajinda, 2013) and maximize the benefit to the marginalized local social groups (Hwang & Steward, 2017). In the PPT approach, the poor people are involved in all the initiatives such as individual producers, employees, casual laborers, and operators of micro and small enterprises (Ndivo & Cantoni, 2015). Further, "pro-poor tourism generates net benefits for the poor" (Cattaranich, 2001: 4). Roe (2013) argued that PPT is not only limited to economic benefits but also ensures the advantages of environmental and cultural aspects of the community. Therefore, the poor people in the destination are the ultimate beneficiaries of PPT. In addition, PPT is a form of sustainable tourism in which marginalized or isolated community groups can be involved in tourism enterprises and maximize the net benefits from local tourism activities (Ashley & Roe, 2001). PPT framework is one of the important strategies to draw up essential policy frameworks that include the way of People’s Involvement (PI) in the host community's tourism efforts (Ndivo, 2015). Accordingly, the PPT approach is a strategy in which tourism policymakers can prepare a sustainable tourism plan through PI in local tourism enterprises. PPT is the multi-stakeholder approach in which government institutions, Non-Government Organization (NGO), donor agencies, private tourism operators, and policymakers have different roles in sustainable tourism development (Roe, 2013). PPT approach is bridging and linking the local community with outsiders to get the economic benefits to involve in tourism, and also facilitates poverty reduction, employment, and new income generation (Torres & Momsen, 2004). There are many tourism potentials in the Batticaloa district and these destinations are attractive to domestic and foreign tourists (Soundaralingam & Gayana, 2016). Even though Sri Lanka was affected by 25 years of civil war, PPT contributed to poverty eradication and economic development of the country (Gunarathna, Nga & Chan, 2013). Notably, Ekanayeke (2011) argued that the poverty level can be eradicated through social capital (bonding and bridging). After the war, tourism potential boomed in the Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka. Out of which, the Pasikuda beach area is well known to local and foreign tourists, and this beach is surrounded by the local community. In the Pasikuda area, it is obvious that the local community provides many products and services to the tourists. Therefore, this destination is the ideal place for the study of PPT and its influence on People’s Involvement (PI) in tourism activities. However, studies in tourism to find benefits to the local community in Pasikuda are rarely conducted. Further, PI and benefits to the poor people from tourism business are essential to reduce poverty and promote long term sustainable tourism development (Scheyvens, 2008). In the literature, researchers identified 12 factors to measure the PI in PPT as shown in table 1. The objectives of the study are as below;

* 1. To identify the factors influencing PI in PPT.
  2. To find the appropriate ways to enhance PI in PPT.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research method**

This is a descriptive and quantitative research and collected data were converted into a numerical form for the data analysis. Sample**:** Convenience sampling method was used to identify the study area. PPT based destinations are rarely available in the Batticaloa district and Pasikuda which is a well-known and famous beach area was selected for this study. 61 respondents who were get involved in tourism enterprises such as transport, tour guides, restaurants, cool bars, homestay services, and souvenir businesses selected for the study.

**Data collection:** Data were collected in January, 2020 through respondent administered questionnaires in which the respondents were asked to give opinion about their involvement in tourism by rating the numbers varying from 5 to 1 which denotes very highly agreeable to the low level of agreeable respectively.

**Data analyses:** Five Likert scale data were analyzed in SPSS version 23 to find the respondents’ agreeable rate and the mean values of the data were displayed in table 1 and used to analyze the results. Further, the percentage of the opinions of respondents was found through the calculation of the variables to the mean values out of total variables (15).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1.** Results of data analyzed on the factors influencing Pro-Poor Tourism

**Descriptive Statistics**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean(x) | Std. Deviation |
| Employment Opportunity | 61 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.8689 | 1.00789 |
| Poverty Eradication | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.8033 | 1.13754 |
| Market Opportunity | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.7541 | 1.17836 |
| Infrastructure Facility | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.4590 | 1.24598 |
| Government Assistance | 61 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.9345 | .85382 |
| Link with NGO | 61 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.9344 | .85379 |
| Link with Government Authority | 61 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.7377 | .65579 |
| Involvement in decision making | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.3115 | .95814 |
| Trust tourists | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.1803 | .94000 |
| Language skills | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.1475 | .87247 |
| Violation | 61 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.4590 | .69699 |
| Corruption | 61 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.4754 | .53562 |
| Training in the hospitality industry | 61 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.4753 | .53561 |
| Availability of Community-Based Organizations | 61 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 1.4754 | .50354 |
| Collective action in tourism affairs | 61 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.0164 | .64529 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 61 |

Data were analyzed based on the evaluation criteria as follows {(0 < xi ≤ 2) = low, (2 < xi ≤ 3) = moderate and (3< xi ≤ 5) = high as followed by Ravichandran & Kaneswaran (2016). Accordingly, 47% of the factors positively influenced PI in PPT. Respondents viewed that corruption among tourism involvers is low. Also, violations among those involved in tourism are low. This dark side of social capital which includes social violation is an essential factor that determines people's collective action (Numerato and Baglioni, 2011). In addition, the result revealed that local people have the capacity to be involved in tourism activities, because people who get involved in tourism activities got training in the hospitality industry, and also they can manage both Sinhala and English languages. These language skills are essential to communication and exchange of goods and services with domestic and foreign tourists. Importantly, the study highlighted that local people trust the tourists, and therefore this high level of social bridging capital encourages PI in tourism activities (KC, Morais & Smith, 2014). However, 27% of the factors explain the moderate chance of PI in local tourism activities. Thus, the respondents feel that tourism activities of the local people do not significantly contribute to poverty alleviation, and that the market opportunities for the local products and service are also not enough. Notably, PI in decision making and people's collective action in the local tourism affairs are at moderate-level (2 < xi ≤ 3) and this highlights the lack of social bonding capital which is fundamental pre-requisite of the PI to achieve the common goals (Woolcock, 1998). In addition, respondents feel that tourism in the area provides employment openings. However, respondents perceived that tourism does not provide the maximum level of employment. Furthermore, infrastructure facilities (locations, electricity, and water) are available, but respondents are not fully satisfied. Besides, three factors (26%) badly affect the PI in tourism activities; people's connection with NGOs, low level connection of people with government organizations, and

lack of supports from government institutions. But, social linking capital is a gateway that gives the poor access to get the financial and non-financial support from NGOs, government authority, and private industry (Babaei, Ahmad & Gill, 2012). Importantly, community unity is one of the aspects of social capital (Putnam, 1998) which is one of the essential factors that determine sustainable tourism development. But, this study found that there is a lower level of Community Based Organization (one of the elements of the social capital) that is created by the community members in the destination. Therefore, this study found that social bridging capital and social harmful capital are encouraging PI in PPT, while social bonding capital and social linking capital are discouraging PI in PPT at Pasikuda.

**CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

Pasikuda has the potential for sustainable PPT in the Batticaloa district. The study found that five factors of PPT highly contributed to the PI in local tourism activities, namely; Trust of local people in tourists (Bridging capital), Local and foreign language skills, and training in the hospitality industry (Capacity). Lack of social violation among the people involved in tourism, and lower level of corruption (SHC). Moreover, two factors also significantly contribute to PI such as people's perception of employment opportunity and availability of the tourism infrastructure facilities. We concluded that the above seven factors contributed to PI: however, there are shortcomings or issues of the factors in PI since Standard Deviation of the factors are not at remarkable points as shown in the table. Four factors of PPT are moderately affecting the PI in PPT; People's perception of the contribution of poverty eradication in PPT, the market opportunity for local tourism products, and services. Likewise, the involvement of local people in decision making in tourism activities, and collective action of local people in tourism affairs are moderately influenced in PI. Therefore, we argued that people's perception of PPT and bonding social capital significantly affect the PI. Finally, we concluded that social linking capital is very poor and badly affecting the PI because government assistance for involvement in tourism activities are low, and the link between government authorities, NGOs, and tourism service providers are also poor. Surprisingly, social bonding capital is poor and that would affect the PI since the availability of Community-Based Organizations are poor. Researchers recommended the following ways to enhance the PI in PPT. First, policymakers should reframe and plan to increase the community link (social linking capital) with government institutions, NGOs, tourism industries, and other relevant stakeholders to acquire financial and nonfinancial assistance (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) that would enhance the PI. Second, an appropriate mechanism should be included to enhance the social bonding capital which included social trust, unity, networks, and involvement in common goals (Woolcock, 1998) in which PI would be enhanced. Third, the development plan’s framework should include social bridging capital that is the trust in tourists, outsiders, and social networks to enhance the people’s interest and PI in local tourism activities (KC et al, 2019). Fourth, SHC which included accepting social norms of the collective action and PI without social violation, domination or threatening group members, and cheating behavior (Port, 1998) should be incorporated in the development framework of PPT. Finally, this study is significant because tourism development and policymakers should reframe the development strategies to enhance the PI that would ensure sustainable tourism development. Further, a deeper study should be conducted to identify the factors that influence in PPT and the relationship between social capital and PI in PPT.

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