

The perception of Stakeholder' s from protected areas on ecotourism development

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Abstract: *Ecotourism is small-scale tourism that visits areas of exceptional natural and cultural interests in a manner that: (1) protects the nature; (2) preserves the culture; (3) enhances the local economy; and (4) educates the tourists. Ecotourism has generated great interest from governments, tourism enterprises, tourists, conservation groups, the private sector and other stakeholders. This interest is generated from more vantage that ecotourism has, it generates profit (company, restaurant, etc...) without destroy the quality of the environment, in fact, it contributes to the conservation and protection of natural ecosystems and the socio-economic development, maintenance and enhancement of the traditions and culture of local people. Ecotourism has disadvantages, too. It is lived on the nature and the use it for realize the ecotourism, but using it that ruin herself.*

Key words : Ecotourism, protected area, development, tourism, stakeholder, community local.

JEL Classification: N00, O10, O13, Q00, Q01, Q56 .

Introduction.

What is Ecotourism?

"The concept of ecotourism became popular, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of the negative social and environmental impacts associated with mass tourism, which places greater emphasis on income and growth, rather than environmental conservation and the socio-cultural goals of host communities (Ziffer, 1989)".

"The term ecotourism emerged in the late 1980s as a direct result of the world's acknowledgment of sustainable and global ecological practices (Diamantis, 1999)". Ceballos-Lascurain (1996) articulated one of the most influential definitions of ecotourism: "traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objectives of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas." As ecotourism has grown in popularity, its definitions have been expanded to incorporate ideas about ecotourism responsibility, environmentally friendly destination management, and sustainable development of local human populations (Goodwin, 1996 and Torquebiau and Taylor, 2009). Indeed, the last few decades have witnessed a continuous expansion of ecotourism. Ecotourism has been growing at rates of 10%–12% per year, 3 times faster than the tourism industry as a whole (IES, 2008). And more importantly, "ecotourism has been embraced by many developing countries — that are home to many of the world's rare and threatened species — hoping to improve their economies in a way that is environmentally sustainable (Brooks et al., 2006)".

"Literature describing the history of

ecotourism shows that the concept has been in existence since the 18th century, but by a different name (e.g., Beaumont, 1998 and Hetzer, 1965)". Beaumont (1998) classifies the first geographers who toured the world during the period as ecotourism, and indicates that the born of national parks, Yellowstone in the United States of America in 1872 and Banff in Canada in 1885, was evidence of first interest in ecotourism.

There is not according on the exact definition of ecotourism in literature (Weaver & Lawton, 2007), and there is an absence of information on tourist preferences for ecotourism and how it can be operationalized in local communities. "Lack of capacity for business development in the local communities and limited information on possible ecotourism businesses have been identified as problems limiting the potential of ecotourism (Munthali, 2007 and Spenceley et al., 2008) around protected areas in Southern Africa. A study conducted by Mabunda (2004), also indicated that although rural communities adjacent to the Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa were interested in sharing their cultural heritage with the tourists, the park management framework did not enable them to do so. Mabunda (2004) also highlights the need for research that investigates tourists' experiences and expectations in and around the KNP".

Honey (1999) defines the concept of ecotourism, , pristine and protected areas with the fundamental objective of educating travelers, as small scale travelling to fragile, providing funds for conservation, yielding direct benefits for the economic development and political empowerment of the local communities, as well as fostering respects for different cultures and human rights.

Fennell (2001), after analyzing available ecotourism definitions, identified five common variables used to describe ecotourism : the natural environment, education, protection or conservation of resources, preservation of culture and community benefits.

According to Hillel (2002), ecotourism should integrate the three objectives of sustainable development, and involve a positive contribution to the conservation of sensitive ecosystems and protected areas ,through financial and political support, as well as ensuring active participation from and economic benefits to local communities and indigenous people, coupled with environmental education of the host communities, professionals and guests.

Literature Review.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) provided a simpler definition of ecotourism in 1990 as responsible travel to natural areas, which seeks to conserve the environment and sustain the wellbeing of the local communities (TIES, 2013). This definition by TIES is supported by the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) explanation of ecotourism, adopted from Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996), "which describes ecotourism as environmentally responsible travel and visitation to natural areas, with the purpose of enjoying and appreciating nature and other cultural features, as well as promoting conservation, minimising visitor impact and providing for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996)".

The concept of ecotourism and its implementation in the tourism industry has raised interest and debates on international

fora such as the 2002 World Ecotourism Summit held in Quebec.

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, and the Global Ecotourism Conference 2007 of Oslo. Although the potential of ecotourism to contribute towards poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, and employment creation has been acknowledged (Fennell, 2001 and World Ecotourism Summit, 2002), the challenge remains in finding ways to implement ecotourism in a manner that jointly addresses these issues.

The key principles of ecotourism as laid out in the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism "(World Ecotourism Summit, 2002) are:

- (i) active contribution to cultural and natural heritage;
- (ii) inclusion of local and native communities in the planning of ecotourism and a contribution to their well-being;
- (iii) visitors are familiarized with the cultural and natural heritage of the places they visit;
- (iv) better independent travelers and organized tours of small-sized groups".

It has been discuss that ecotourism has comparative advantage as a driver for rural development because it tends to occur in peripheral and non-industrialized or rural regions, where opportunities for expanding the economy can be realized at a relatively low cost. The involvement of local communities in ecotourism can also improve their attitudes towards conservation. "Controversy exists, however, over the meaning of the concept, its operationalization (Fennell, 2001 and Weaver and Lawton, 2007)" "and its potential to yield socio-economic benefits for rural communities (Isaacs, 2000 and Wunder, 2000)".

Operationalization of ecotourism that promotes the goals of contributing to nature conservation and rural development.

More important that rural communities and managers of protected areas have information on the tourist preferences for ecotourism, for economic potential. From an economic perspective, demand and supply side considerations are very important.

The success of ecotourism pivot on the extent to which local communities are willing and able to be involved, in the planning and implementation of ecotourism projects.

At the same time, the preferences of tourists for specific ecotourism activities and their willingness to pay for the ecotourism goods and services that communities supply are also important.

2. Stakeholders of protected areas.

"Systems thinking is required to bridge the social and biophysical sciences (Allison & Hobbs, 2004)" to help understand, for example, how to link social and ecological systems for sustainability (Berkes & Folke, 1998). Fennell, 2004 and Dredge, 2006 highlight that issues associated with tourism and protected areas are inherently complex, multi-scaled (local, regional, national and global) and involve horizontal as well as vertical linkages. For example, communities, whether local or further afield, are an integral part of the protected area tourism system.

"Management of sustainable tourism relating to protected areas should anticipate system dynamism and transformative changes (Plummer & Fennell, 2009)".

This whole system perspective is being actively pursued in current research on

tourism as a complex adaptive system (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2005 and Lacitignola et al., 2007). "Such systems, where the social components are explicitly acknowledged (as is the case with tourism), are known as social-ecological systems (SES) (Allison and Hobbs, 2006, Gunderson and Holling, 2002, Schianetz and Kavanagh, 2008 and Walker and Salt, 2006)". Many interacting variables are characteristic of SES, with the systems behaving according to three principles: _order is emergent as opposed to predetermined; _the system's history is irreversible; _and the system's future is unpredictable.

The power of nature and natural settings in attracting tourists is widely recognized, with protected areas offering a significant attraction to tourists (Pedersen, 2002 and Reinius and Fredman, 2007). Increasingly, tourism is one of the most common uses of protected areas. Protected areas are defined as areas of "land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means (IUCN, 1994, p. 7)". Very often, protected areas and tourism are intertwined and their respective impacts on local communities are difficult to separate.

The sustainability of protected areas is accepted as dependent on due attendance to their social, economic and cultural context.

However, conflicts between protected areas and communities can adversely affect this sustainability. Plummer and Fennell (2009) propose that multi-stakeholder conflict, complexity and uncertainty are issues that remain unresolved and persistent. When problems persist and are not resolved by current interventions they may be classed as

“messy” or “wicked” and require a new paradigm to understand them. Before exploring a new paradigm or way of thinking about and investigating the relationships (and associated impacts) between protected areas, tourism and local communities, it is useful if not essential to review current methods using a “whole system” perspective.

Components of a Protected Area Tourism System.

Protected area tourism systems are generally comprised of three key components: a given protected area, tourism operations and associated communities. Protected areas themselves take several forms. According to official IUCN designation, there are six types of protected areas: strict nature reserves or wilderness areas; national parks; natural monuments; habitat or species management areas; protected land or seascapes; and managed resource protection areas (IUCN, 1994). The primary management objectives of these protected areas differ considerably.

Protected area tourism systems also comprise a tourism component.

Protected area tourism differs from other kinds of tourism in that it occurs in natural settings.

“It fits within the broader undertaking of ‘natural area tourism’, which provides an alternative to traditional mass tourism. Natural area tourism includes adventure, nature-based, wildlife and ecotourism (Newsome, Moore, & Dowling, 2002)”. This paper adopts an inclusive definition of ‘protected area tourism’ to incorporate all tourism activities that occur within protected areas.

Local communities form the final key component of protected area tourism

systems. Local communities include residents living within or in close proximity to a protected area. “Geographical location is an important defining context in determining ‘local community’ (Burns & Sofield, 2001)”. The protected area and associated tourism impacts on local communities both directly and indirectly through its existence and capacity to attract tourists.

Geographical location does not imply uniformity in local attitudes or functional relationship to protected area tourism.

Attitudes, involvement and dependencies of locals on protected areas and tourism are diverse and context-dependent.

Relevant factors affecting local attitudes and relations to tourism include length of residence; employment; degree of economic dependence; socio-cultural and economic distance between tourists and the community; and distance of community from the tourism area.

“Direct economic dependence on tourism has been shown to be the single most important factor affecting perceptions (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005)”.

The choice of a geographically defined ‘local community’ is supported by the spatially restricted nature of protected area tourism and the assumption that geographically adjacent communities will experience the greatest impacts arising from that area.

“The tourism literature also reveals a predilection for a geographical perspective of community (Beeton, 2006b)” although this should be treated with caution as the boundary is necessarily porous to allow for a range of social, economic and political factors that may impact from scales above and below.

“The involvement of local people in analyzing and understanding protected area

tourism has been noted as crucial as these people are most likely to be affected by policy development (Plummer & Fennell, 2009)". While acknowledging the highly contested nature of 'community', for simplicity this paper adopts the perspective of geographical or local communities.

Importantly, local community comprises just one element of those interested or affected by protected area tourism. A wide-range of potential stakeholders associated with protected areas exist and are also essential parts of the protected area tourism system.

Local community represents one key group of stakeholders.

"Others include those directly affected such as visitors themselves, Park management and tourism authorities, plus those further afield (Newsome et al., 2002)". "These other stakeholders represent 'communities of interest', which are typified by shared interests rather than a defined spatial location (Beeton, 2006a)".

"The management authority for a given protected area varies according to the differing management objectives (Eagles, 2009)". Traditionally, the state or government is the management authority.

This role is diversifying, however, and partnerships are gaining prominence.

Increasingly, the management authority is vested in alternative arrangements involving a range of actors.

Prominent arrangements include para-statal models, non-profit corporations such as non-governmental organizations, public or private for-profit corporations and communities themselves. "Co-management arrangements, where decision-making power is shared between two or more bodies, one of whom is government, is another emerging approach (Eagles, 2009)".

Ecotourism and local communities: conflict, compromise or cooperation?

Local communities comprise groups with different and potentially conflicting interests (NGOs, Community, Government, Tourism Industry).

That is, not all groups want the same things.

The tourist industry asks a healthy business environment with:

- financial security;
- a trained and responsible workforce;
- attractions of sufficient quality to ensure a steady flow of visitors – who stay longer and visit more often;
- a significant return on investment.

Those interested in the natural environment and cultural heritage issues seek:

- protection of the environment through prevention,
- improvement, correction of damage, and restoration;
- to motivate people to be more aware
- and therefore 'care for' rather than 'use up' resources.

Community members seek a healthy place in

which to live with:

- food, adequate and clean water, health care, rewarding work for equitable pay, education and recreation;
- respect for cultural traditions;
- opportunities to make decisions about the future.

Some concerns that each may hold in common include:

- issues of access, such as when, where and how tourists visit and move from place to place;
- host and guest issues, such as cultural impact or common use of infrastructure;

- land use issues, such as hunting/wildlife habitat, agriculture/recreation, preservation/ development, etc.

3. IMPACTS OF TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS (BENEFITS, NEGATIVE IMPACTS).

There are a number of reasons why local communities may consider ecotourism:

- a desire to be part of strong growth in tourism generally and see the potential of catering for special-interest tourism (niche markets);
- an awareness of the high value of natural attractions in the locale;
- empathy for conservation ideals and the need for sustainable tourism;
- a desire to responsibly rejuvenate the local tourist industry.

One of the main principles or elements of ecotourism is its ability to maximize the benefits of tourism, not only as regards income to a region but also the preservation of social infrastructure and biosphere conservation.

Specifically, these benefits include:

- increased demand for accommodation houses and food and beverage outlets, and therefore improved viability for new and established hotels, motels, guest houses, farm stays, etc.;
- additional revenue to local retail businesses and other services (e.g. medical, banking, car hire, cottage industries, souvenir shops, tourist attractions);
- increased market for local products (e.g. locally grown produce, artefacts, value-added goods), thereby sustaining traditional customs and practices;

- employment of local labour and expertise (e.g. ecotour guides, retail sales assistants, restaurant table waiting staff);

- source of funding for the protection and enhancement/maintenance of natural attractions and symbols of cultural heritage;

- funding and/or volunteers for field work associated with wildlife research and archaeological studies;

- heightened community awareness of the value of local/indigenous culture and the natural environment.

As these benefits suggest, ecotourism is about attracting visitors for the 'right' reasons, and not the 'tourist dollar' at the expense of a community's natural and cultural attributes. However, local communities are not immune from ecotourism impacts.

The issues and problems.

The conflictual issues expressed by representatives of host communities to tourism development generally fall into a number of interrelated categories:

- the lack of opportunities for involvement in decision-making relating to ecotourism;
- inadequate responses from governments when administrative or legislative mechanisms have been established to involve them in such decision-making;
- the lack of financial, social and vocational benefits flowing to these communities from projects that commercially exploit what they regard as their resources;
- the need to establish better tools for evaluating socio-cultural impacts and ensuring this is completed over the more emphasized environmental impacts on the natural environments which are usually of more

interest to the outside investors and conservation groups;

- impacts on community cohesion and Structure
- the rapidity of tourism development that in many cases significantly accelerates social change.

These concerns embrace a wide range of issues relating to the management of natural resources adjacent to these communities. The central issue is the inadequate levels of participation perceived by these communities in the management of what they regard as their traditional domains.

Control is exerted over local communities both economically and culturally. Tourism involves an interactive process between host (both human and environment) and guest and therefore 'the culture of the host society is as much at risk from various forms of tourism as physical environments'.

In many cases tourists view indigenous cultures and local communities as 'products' of the tourism experience that exist to be 'consumed' along with all the other elements of their trip.

As tourists are often paying to watch and photograph indigenous people, the tourists feel that it is their 'right' to treat them accordingly _as providing a service, and as a product being purchased as a component of their travel cost.

Significantly, however, many local cultures may actively 'construct' what appears (to the tourist's camera) to be an 'authentic' cultural display but which in reality is a staged event specifically for tourists' consumption.

This phenomenon, known as 'staged authenticity' (cf. Mac Cannell, 1976), in many cases serves a strategic purpose in

satisfying the tourist's curiosity while allowing the maintenance of actual cultural rituals to escape the hungry tourist's lens. This is the positive side (from the indigenous culture's perspective) of the commodification of tourism, as in many cases it is the interest in local cultures that in many ways helps to sustain and even revive traditional cultural practices.

However, the commodification of culture often has significant impacts on local communities.

'Staged authenticity' is often actively encouraged by operators whose chief concern is often with providing a 'cultural experience for tourists that can be experienced in comfort and safety and which is aesthetically pleasing.

These cultural performances often become detached from their actual cultural meaning and begin to be performed purely for the viewing public. Too often cultural attractions become overtly commercialized in nature, satisfying the visitors' needs but losing all meaning and significance for the indigenous population. Similarly, indigenous communities often have little or no say over whether they want tourism and they derive few real benefits from their 'performance'. Sustaining the well-being and the cultural traditions of the local community where ecotourism takes place becomes fundamental to definitions of ecotourism

Ecotourism is in large part a sustainable development strategy:

"whereby natural resource amenities, the local community and the visitor benefit from tourism activity (Pearce et al., 1996)".

The following definition of ecotourism incorporates the above points: travel, often to developing countries, to relatively undisturbed protected natural areas for study,

enjoyment or volunteer assistance that concerns itself with the flora, fauna, geology and ecosystems of an area – as well as the people (caretakers) who live nearby, their needs, their culture and their relationship with the land.

Similarly, many organizations are now beginning to recognize the integral part that local indigenous people play in tourism by including cultural understanding and appreciation in their definitions of ecotourism. "In this way ecologically sustainable tourism is increasingly becoming aligned to conservation, environmental and cultural understanding and appreciation (EAA, 1996)".

Thus ecotourism aims to promote and foster a respect and an increase in awareness of other cultures, in fostering mutually beneficial relationships between hosts and tourists.

While it is important for the traditional values of local and indigenous communities be maintained, indigenous people must not be asked to maintain their traditional practices simply for the sake of tourist entertainment. However, it must also be recognized that cultures undergo a constant process of change and it is this process of genuine culture change and exchange that is a fundamental component of ecotourism. 'Genuine' in this sense may be read as synonymous with sovereignty. Local communities must be in an empowered rather than a subordinate position from which they have autonomy over their culture, its artefacts and rituals, its very direction, while engaging in and with cultures that interact with them but do not exploit them.

In this way, both the visitors and the hosts benefit from the tourism experience while at the same time avoiding negative

cultural impacts on the indigenous population. Participation of local communities in the activity of tourism, therefore, is an essential element to sustaining the wellbeing of local people.

Through the interactive process between the visitor and the host population both can benefit experientially from ecotourism. By developing an appreciation of local communities and their customs and traditions, 'a process of mutual respect and understanding between societies can be greatly enhanced' (Burchett, 1992: 10) and the achievement of successful interaction between hosts and guests will only benefit and sustain the well-being of local communities. Local communities can benefit from ecotourism economically if they play a greater participatory role in the tourism process. The greater the control over tourism in their region, the more culturally sustainable they will become.

Employment.

One of the most obvious and immediate benefits of tourism associated with local communities is the increase in employment opportunities and income generation for the host region:

- direct employment (associated service industries such as hotels, restaurants, concessions);
- indirect employment (generated as a result of increasing industry inputs such as employment at a retail souvenir outlet);
- induced employment (generated as a result of increased spending capacity of local residents due to increased receipts from tourism; consumption of goods for example) (Healy, 1989: 21).

The theoretical research regarding the stakeholders' perception on ecotourism development.

Jessica Coria, Enrique Calfucura in the article "Ecotourism and the development of indigenous communities: The good, the bad, and the ugly", they analyzed the connection between the factors regarding the advantages and disadvantages of ecotourism experience in indigenous communities. They stress the need for a better approach to enhance the indigenous communities' livelihood possibilities coming from ecotourism, as well as to promote land tenure and communities' empowerment.

Heng Zhang, Siu Lai Lei in the article "A structural model of residents' intention to participate in ecotourism: The case of a wetland community", analysis indicates residents' environmental knowledge positively affects attitudes towards ecotourism, which in turn directly and indirectly determine the intention to participate in ecotourism through their individual landscape affinity. Thus, residents' involvement in ecotourism may be stimulated through a) appropriate management strategies aimed at increasing their environmental knowledge, b) encouraging positive ecotourism attitudes, and c) environmental planning that promotes residents' affinity for local attractions.

P. Chaminuka, R.A. Groeneveld, A.O. Selomane, E.C. van Ierland, in the article "Tourist preferences for ecotourism in rural communities adjacent to Kruger National Park: A choice experiment approach", analyzed the potential for development of ecotourism in rural communities adjacent to Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa. They determine preferences of tourists,

according to origin and income levels, for ecotourism and their marginal willingness to pay (MWTP) for three ecotourism attributes: village accommodation, village tours and visits to crafts markets.

Jennifer K. Strickland-Munro, Helen E. Allison, Susan A. Moore, in the article "Using resilience concepts to investigate the impacts of protected area tourism on communities", research in systems thinking and resilience suggest that future conditions may be different, more extreme and rapidly changing than previously experienced, requiring very different approaches to assessment. New methods acknowledging uncertainty and change are required. They present a novel approach to investigating the impacts of protected area tourism on communities by framing them as a social-ecological system and adopting resilience assessment principles.

Dohar Bob M. Situmorang, Isti Raafaldini Mirzanti in the article "Social Entrepreneurship to Develop Ecotourism" research is based on the Ecotourism offers a form of travel different from mass tourism. A study was conducted to find appropriate approaches for developing ecotourism. The main focus is given to the potential of a regional ecotourism, including human, culture, and supporting resources. Research was also conducted to determine the perspectives of tourists, because their needs' fulfilment cannot be separated from sustainability of destination.

Stephen Wearing, John Neil in the article "Ecotourism: Impact, Potential and Possibilities, Chapter 6: Linking conservation and communities: Community and Benefit and Social" They analyzed advantages and disadvantages generated by development of Ecotourism and analyzed relationship

between Ecotourism and Community Local.

Patrick Brandful Cobbinah in the article "Contextualizing the Meaning of Economics" they analyzed despite this lack of clarity on the true meaning of Ecotourism, there is a broad set of ecotourism principles that are clear and widely promoted, including environmental conservation and education, cultural preservation and experience, and economic benefits.

CONCLUSIONS.

Tourism is one of the major global industries. Tourist attractions are currently becoming more diverse and new alternative types of tourism to mass tourism are emerging. These alternative kinds of tourism both help to conserve the environment and boost the socioeconomic development of local communities.

Ecotourism is an example of one of these new types of alternative tourism.

However, in order to develop it, policies, strategies, processes and even a unique business culture must be established, which will make it possible to create procedures and solutions to changes that occur in the surroundings.

A destination must inform all its stakeholders as to what is happening, considering that if information flows freely and everyone collaborates with each other, the results achieved for the destination may be greater.

The term stakeholder must include all those players that are affected or may be affected by ecotourism activities in the destination, namely Governments, the local population, companies, administrators of protected areas, NGOs, etc.

Among these stakeholders, special attention must be paid to local communities.

This group, which is part of the local population, must be made part of ecotourism planning, given that this activity may improve the local population's standard of living, especially in under-developed countries, where this could help to reduce the poverty rate.

If all those local stakeholders are not taken into account when setting up ecotourism in a destination, it could have many a negative impact on the location, arising from social, environmental or political problems. In particular, the local community and NGOs are currently positioning themselves as groups with particular influence in certain countries, and excluding them from territorial planning could have many adverse consequences in the destination in question.

Therefore, when it comes to developing ecotourism in a location, it is essential to take into account the idea that planning must be conducted in coordination and with the collaboration of all the agents that can affect or may be affected by this economic activity, putting particular emphasis on local communities, since they should be the first to benefit from ecotourism through the creation of new companies and new jobs, which will help to increase the local population's living standards at all times.

In conclusion, in order to achieve sustainable development in a location through ecotourism, all stakeholders must work together in a coordinated manner and in search of common benefits for the destination, with the aim of enhancing the socioeconomic development of the area's population and promoting the conservation of natural resources, in order that they may be used by future generations.

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