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ON THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM VENTURES IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

Tourism constitutes an important sector in the economy of many countries around the world and it is recognized as being a powerful factor for the economic development and improvement of livelihood of rural communities. In this context, community-based tourism ventures have emerged and have been developed to attract and increase the flow of tourists to certain rural areas, with partial success, due to the lack of appropriate management and business skills. Research has revealed that rural tourism is not perfectly organized so to be sustainable and to maximize the benefit for the local community and sketchy suggestions for the development of community-based tourism have been reported in the literature (Wilson, et. al, 2001; Sharpley, 2002; Sebele, 2010; Zapata, et. al, 2011). Based on the review of literature, key elements determining the success of the development of community-based tourism ventures in rural areas, along with management recommendations targeting to sustainable tourism development, are discussed. Among the recommendations, a) the active participation of the local communities in the development of a sustainable tourist project; b) the cooperation and active contribution of the key stakeholders (namely: government, private sector, NGOs and communities) in the development of a strategic action plan (that should take into account the environmental protection, the conservation of natural resources and the preservation of cultural identity) and c) the utilization of the new technology for the dissemination of information in promoting the community tourism enterprises are considered essential elements for the beneficial and sustainable development of the local community. The proposed recommendations aim to address the main elements on how to successfully manage tourism enterprises within rural communities. The discussion of academic research in the topic has demonstrated that, most of the time, community enterprises in rural areas emerge form spontaneous actions of non-skilled entrepreneurs lacking of knowledge and a planning strategy. As a result of uncoordinated strategic action among the key stakeholders, community-based tourism ventures lack sustainability criteria and management plans that properly consider the potential negative
impacts in the development of tourism in rural communities. Communities in rural areas will be better positioned if they follow business management principles (Sebele, 2010) and adopt strategic management conservation efforts to develop tourism ventures that allow them to succeed and profit from the global tourism market. The development of a sustainable management strategy that guarantees the implementation of a planned tourism activity will help to protect the natural and cultural resources of a rural community while delivering satisfaction to tourists and contributing to livelihood improvement within the local community.

**Key words:**

Tourism; sustainability; rural; alternative; community-based tourism ventures; stakeholders; management; planning; strategy.

**References**


