3 Community Development in Volunteer Tourism Destinations

Introduction

This chapter focuses on community development through the implementation of volunteer tourism programmes. It reviews a range of theories, research and practical applications to enable tourism to act as an agent for positive change, particularly in rural and remote areas of developing countries. The predominance of Western business approaches to tourism development has tended to exclude other more holistic approaches found in the field of community development. In this chapter, we will draw on the work of authors such as Beeton (2006) to examine community development approaches that could be more specifically applied to volunteer tourism. As Cole (2007: 443) points out 'The values, attitudes and behaviour of tourists are determined by their own social environment, cultural identity and way of life' and these attitudes and behaviours in many cases are the cause for miscommunications, suspicions, misunderstandings and conflict between local community members and tourists. Community development approaches offer mechanisms to enable improved interaction, which is seen as essential in the development of volunteer tourism that could ultimately substantively improve the well-being of the local community.

An effective and fulfilling volunteer tourism experience cannot occur without a strong sense of philosophical and practical inclusiveness. There are many examples in mass tourism where inclusiveness was not central to tourism development, resulting in cases of exploitation and dependency. For example, Bauer (2008: 280) states that in the tourist/host community relationship 'a traditional master/servant dependency is maintained, e.g. western tourists are served by indigenous waiters, or staged inauthentic performances of traditional customs are consumed as part of a package'. This exploitation of the indigenous peoples of a destination is often unintentional on the tourists' behalf, but nevertheless

destructive. Bauer (2008: 281) mentions two specific tourist practises, tipping and haggling, which often cause conflict between the two parties. In cultures of reciprocity-based exchange, for example the Pacific Region, tipping is frowned upon as this gesture needs to be returned at some stage. The tourist's tip at departure places the tourism employee in a state of distress and eternal debt as reciprocity is out of the question. Although the result of tipping may not be intentional, through the tourist's ignorance they have placed the tourism employee within a predicament. In addition, haggling can also be very destruc-tive. 'When it comes to haggling, in many situations, the few cents bargained down hard may have just been the amount needed for the only meal of the day for the vendor and his family' (Bauer, 2008: 281).

Bauer (2008: 283) found that 'personal communication in 2006 with a Peruvian village revealed the dismay of local people at the use of sacred knowl-edge and rituals deeply embedded in local culture on foreigners who lack the mental framework to respect indigenous concepts'. In looking at mechanisms to reduce these occurrences, one avenue might be education, which can play an important role in the alleviation of misunderstandings between the host community and the tourist. Gulinck *et al.* (2001: 7) found that along with its potential to alleviate problems, education may also raise the quality of the experience for the tourist at the spiritual level 'and help them develop more of an awareness in relation to conservation and the protection of local cultures'. It is these types of issues that this chapter will now examine.

Valuing Local Cultures

The initial treatment of tourism destinations in developing countries typically made implicit assumptions that 'locals' were pre-modern, primitive, poor and technologically backward, while their (Western) 'guests' were modern, sophis-ticated, wealthy and technologically advanced. However, in some destinations, this binary classification has gradually faded away as many local communities in developing countries are looking beyond the blights of mass tourism to focus on the possible benefits of smaller scaled, community-based tourism projects (Aramberri, 2001; Meethan, 2001; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001; Sherlock, 2001; Wearing & McDonald, 2002; Mbaiwa, 2004; van der Duim *et al.*, 2005; Chan, 2006; Cole, 2007; Lyons & Wearing, 2008b).

It is suggested that alternative tourism ideally reconfigures the tourist desti-nation as an interactive space where tourists become creative actors engaging in behaviours that are mutually beneficial to local communities, and to the cul-tural and social environment of those communities; tourists in this context take home an experience that is potentially life changing and, at minimum, impacts on the self in some way (Butler, 1990; Wearing, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Wearing *et al.*, 2008, 2010a).

Many local communities, particularly those in remote and rural locations around the world, are looking to improve their conditions by instituting tour-ism development (Williams & Shaw, 1999). For these countries, which are often facing declining terms of trade for agricultural products and protectionist

policies in the West, tourism is seen as an alternative route to economic growth (Sinclair, 1998).

> Tourism is characterised by high growth and, with the exception of the airline sector, low protectionism. It provides increasing per capita income, foreign currency and government revenue which can be used to promote the growth of manufacturing. Tourism also generates employment and enables some members of the population to move from the domestic or informal sector to higher-paid jobs in the formal sector. Although expenditure on training and infrastructure per job created may be considerable and the stock of natural assets may decrease, such effects also result from other forms of economic expansion.
>
> (Sinclair, 1998: 38)

As alluded to by Sinclair (1998), a number of problems arise with the use of developing countries' environmental resources for tourism. The most significant of these from an economic perspective is 'market failure'. In virtually all elements of the tourism industry, developing countries are unable to compete with services from the developed world. These include airlines, hotels, travel agents and tour guides. For example, hoteliers in developing countries often lack the informational knowledge required to negotiate successfully with international hotel management companies and tour operators.

> The effect is that contractual terms are significantly worse for countries with less human capital in the form of negotiating skills, contributing to relatively low and sometimes decreasing foreign currency returns per incoming tourist.
>
> (Sinclair, 1998: 39)

In cases like this, where local communities are unable to compete, their participation in the tourism process withers, resulting in the lion's share of tourism income being taken away or 'leaked' out from the destination (Liu, 2003). In this process of supposed 'tourism development', local communities and their environmental resources are objectified and commodified. In effect, developing countries are subjected to a process of rationalization inherent in the neo-liberal economic system, where the value of goods and services is measured by efficiencies in production, and where consumers demand predictability and control (Ritzer, 2007).

Therefore, there is a need to examine alternative approaches to tourism that avoid these objectifying and commodifying processes so that the relationship between local cultures and tourists is actively repositioned. One approach to re-orientate this relationship is the concept of 'social value', which in the context of tourism seeks to endorse local people and cultures. The idea is to create a tourism space where local communities play a central role in the planning and management of tourism in the places where they live. As a part of this process, micro-social elements need to be analysed, because these are fundamental to the conceptualization of tourist destinations. This emphasis is often overlooked in the sociological analysis of the tourist experience, where the focus instead is typically on macro-social influences, impacts of tourism upon destinations, the quality of the tourist experience, and industry construction of the experience.

Social value is created through the way tourists and locals interact in the tourist destination. Ideally, tourists take their meaning of the site from the people who occupy it. The interactive dimension of the site represents a social process where a place has significance for the people who occupy it and the tourists who visit it. Cunningham (2006) argues that social valuing of the visited place can both enhance the tourist experience and enrich the culture and identity of the local population. He presents a case study of the Japanese island of Ogasawara, where local cultures and heritage are greatly undervalued by tourists and the tourism industry. In order to reverse this trend, Cunningham argues that the 'Obeikei' community should communicate to visitors their unique understanding of, and value for, the place that is their island – its natural resources, remoteness and rich cultural history. Cunningham (2006) suggests that the local community should find a way of describing and representing their unique identity as 'islanders' to the tourists. By being exposed to messages of local value, it is thought that tourists might then be able to engage with the island's history at the invitation of the locals on their terms. The result would be a broadening of the tourism experience of both the local and the tourist. The locals might find that their culture and local identity is affirmed, while the traveller would have a meaningful experience engaging with local knowledge and understanding. As Taylor (2001: 16) notes, 'important local values' are promoted through tourist–local interaction, communication and engagement with the locals.

When locals are given a voice in the tourism development process, they are given an opportunity to communicate the social value of their places (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003). In other words, messages have the potential to be presented to tourists that provide an important point of interest and empathy for local communities (Cole, 2007). However, in instances where locals are positioned by the tourism industry as being at the bottom of the tourism hierarchy, meaningful interaction between them and tourists is difficult. The tourism experience is thus lessened as a result. If local communities are motivated and supported to represent their position in the tourism hierarchy, then there is potential for them to identify, clarify and advocate their valuing of place and, subsequently, for tourists, to experience the place and the way of life of local cultures. It may seem a somewhat idealistic position but there is evidence to suggest that social valuing can communicate spiritual or traditional connections between the past and the present with the potential for empowering currently disempowered groups by allowing them to reclaim elements of their place and culture. For example, it has been suggested that 'township tourism' in Soweto, South Africa, has instilled local residents with pride as they have been able to communicate and share their struggle with visitors, their experience of past oppression, and their vision for freedom and economic equality in the present and future (Cole, 2006). This may be an overstatement (and is a stark contrast to slum-and-ghetto tourism, which, when run by outsiders, can operate to further objectify locals), but this example nevertheless points to an important set of tourism relationships and potential outcomes.

In recent years, the social valuing of place has gone some way towards challenging hegemonic constructions of the tourist space. This is further evidenced with reference to the renaming of (what are now) national parks, wilderness areas and territories around the world with their original indigenous names. As an outcome of 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century Western military,

political and economic dominance, many of the world's most iconic places came to be named after Western political leaders, monarchs, surveyors or given Western geographical designations, as a result of their re-discovery for European countries. Examples of places recently reinstated with those names bequeathed to them by their traditional indigenous landowners include Uluru and Kata Tjuta (Ayers Rock and Mt Olga, Australia), Sagarmatha/Qomolangma (Mt Everest, Nepal and Tibet), Denali (Mt McKinley, USA) and Nunavut (Northwest Territories, Canada). The renaming of these sites acknowledges the existence and valuing of these places prior to their re-discovery by European explorers. It recognizes living cultures and ways of life of the original inhabitants (Young, 2009). The result is that contemporary links are made between the indigenous culture and particular sites, as well as recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous place names. Thus, certain places are communicated as being associated with the culture and spiritual traditions of indigenous people. In some cases, such as Uluru and Kata Tjuta, renaming signals devolution of ownership and management back to traditional landowners, thus empowering them to take some level of control concerning its future (Young, 2009).

Developing Volunteer Tourism Projects with Local Communities

By definition, volunteer tourism takes place at the community level, with local people taking a leadership role, charting the direction of the tourism enterprise. While tourism is typically viewed as a negative force in many local communities, there are alternative approaches that can ameliorate the potential problems associated with it. Moreover, with the right approach to participation and planning, tourism has the potential to act as a tool for sustainable community development and poverty reduction (Beeton, 2006).

While not targeting volunteer tourism specifically, Manyara and Jones (2007) case studied six tourism-focused community-based initiatives in Kenya by carrying out interviews with community leaders, managers, academics, support organizations, government officials and community members. Their findings indicate that potential benefits from such initiatives are proportional to the level of community involvement – the higher the involvement the greater the benefits. Volunteer tourism organizations can learn from their findings:

> The results highlight a number of critical success factors for CBEs (community-based enterprises): awareness and sensitisation, community empowerment, leadership, capacity building and an appropriate policy framework. When considering the development of CBEs, these factors should be considered, and checks and balances should be incorporated to avoid failure. Local communities and their leaders, for instance, need to be adequately sensitised and empowered so that they can make informed decisions to enhance sustainability and to secure appropriate capacity building to enhance skills and knowledge and promote transparency. Moreover, an appropriate policy framework is crucial for guiding CBE developments. The policy framework should address partnership and land ownership issues.
>
> (Manyara & Jones, 2007: 641)

In another example, Al-Oun and Al-Homoud (2008) investigated the potential for tourism to stem population displacement as a result of desertification in the Badia Desert, Jordan. In remote and rural environments, where people continue to live in traditional ways, the authors argue that a community-based approach to tourism is likely to be most successful. The proposed tourism venture for the area was developed by carrying out extensive research in the initial phases. This included field interviews, field surveys, archival research and a pilot tourism project. The findings indicate that the success of this model depends on community development and control, an appraisal of the unique tourism resources in the area, a deep knowledge of the social values of the locals, and the creation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and partnerships with government agencies to enable communities to work together in order to transcend tribal differences.

It is important therefore that local communities and their unique social values are central to any form of tourism development, and if the community so desires, communicated to interested tourists. These efforts will go a long way toward protecting social values and the impact that outside tourists might have on these.

Measures to Evaluate Volunteer Tourism in Local Communities

A major difficulty in assessing the benefits of community development through tourism is evaluating the success factors. There is a need for benchmarks and indicators to evaluate tourism impacts accurately from a community perspective. More specifically in relation to poverty alleviation, Manyara and Jones (2007) argue that assessment of community-based tourism initiatives should measure: (i) the increase in direct income to households; (ii) improvement in community services such as education (measured by increased literacy and numeracy levels), health services, clean water, appropriate housing, roads, transport and communication; and (iii) the development of sustainable and diversified lifestyles. On this final point, tourism should act as a platform that stimulates the creation of both tourism- and non-tourism-related small and medium-size enterprises. Manyara and Jones (2007) also point to the potential problems associated with tourism-focused community-based initiatives and the degree of external support required to start and maintain them. The issue of external dependency is one that every organization involved in these strategies must be acutely aware.

Fortunately, there are several practical community-based tourism development models available that can address some of the issues illuminated by Manyara and Jones (2007). These include the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach, the Tourism Optimization Management Model (TOMM), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Each brings a viable framework to the community development table that can assist with the inclusion of volunteer tourism in the alternative tourism mix.

A popular model amongst those rooted in more traditional business practices has been TBL reporting. TBL employs classic auditing and accounting reporting tools to assess the economic, environmental and social implications of a business, government initiative, NGO programme or community (Gilkison, 1999; Savitz & Weber, 2006). The TBL approach has been applied in a variety of tourism settings, likely due to the industry's reliance upon the natural and social environments (Faux & Dwyer, 2009). TBL has been applied in the context of ecotourism (Buckley, 2003), wildlife tourism (Higginbottom, 2004), sustainable tourism (Dwyer, 2005) and surf tourism (Scorse, 2010). Scorse argues that when ocean or natural surf breaks are labelled 'priceless' in Western society, this may actually risk devaluing them. We should instead attempt to attach economic value to these things so that they may be compared with other competing uses of the same space and given the credence they deserve. However, while this business-oriented structure holds appeal for the mass tourism industry, Scorse does point out the inherent dangers of assessing monetary value to the environmental and social advantages of a place or programme. Once it is valued in this way, it is then assessable against other uses (e.g. real estate, smokestack industry). When applied to cases that include volunteer tourism, it would be imperative that the social benefits gained by the volunteer (such as skill development, mental and physical rejuvenation, and cultural knowledge) be included in any TBL-based assessment.

The next model was specifically developed for tourism and is known as the TOMM (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1997). It builds on other sustainable land management strategies such as the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Stankey *et al*., 1985) to incorporate a strong political dimension, as well as seeking to monitor and manage optimum *sustainable* performance of tourism rather than maximum levels or carrying capacities. TOMM is designed to monitor and quantify the key economic, marketing, environmental, sociocultural and experiential benefits, and impacts of tourism activity, and assist in the assessment of emerging issues and alternative future management options for the sustainable development and management of tourism activity (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1997). TOMM is being used to help change the culture of the tourism industry and its stakeholders by generating tangible evidence that the viability of the industry is dependent upon the quality of the visitor experiences it generates, and the condition of the natural, cultural and social resources upon which it relies. TOMM involves the following main features:

- identifying strategic imperatives (such as policies and emerging issues);
- identifying community values, product characteristics, growth patterns, market trends and opportunities, positioning and branding, and alternative scenarios for tourism in a region;
- identifying optimum conditions, indicators, acceptable ranges, monitoring techniques, benchmarks, annual performance and predicted performance; and
- identifying poor performance, exploring cause/effect relationships, identifying results requiring a tourism response or other sector response, and developing management options to address poor performance (McArthur, 1997).

In Australia for example, the TOMM model has been used to address tourism impacts on the community, economy and environment of Kangaroo Island, a popular tourist destination that lies off the coast of South Australia (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005). The implementation of a tourism planning and monitoring model on Kangaroo Island has attracted worldwide attention due to its strong focus on involving all relevant stakeholders, including local and state government, tourism operators, the island's community members and natural area managers (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1997). Its implementation on Kangaroo Island has been largely successful, serving a multitude of stakeholders and their equally diverse interests, operating simultaneously at a local, regional and state level over numerous public and private land tenures.

The main problem associated with TOMM, particularly in a developing world context, is the time and cost required to develop, implement and then maintain the programme (Beeton, 2006: 69–71). However, the basic principles are still worthwhile in terms of tourism planning and development. One possible way to deal with the time and costs involved with such a model would be to use volunteers as a part of the volunteer programme under the direction of an NGO to undertake the research using this model.

The next model to be presented in this chapter is PRA (Chambers, 1983, 1994; Rifkin, 1996; Manyara & Jones, 2007). Chambers' (1983) classic approach to data collection in participatory research requires placing the research participants at the centre of any development programme, recognizing that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to be at the very least partners in the research process, and preferably leaders. PRA encourages local communities to value their knowledge and ideas in the management of their resources. It also requires that the researcher immerse her/himself in the community.

For example, in the case of PRA applied to volunteer tourism, the researchers' methodological aim would be to achieve, with members of the community, a state of inter-subjectivity – a common and shared understanding of social reality. Reaching inter-subjectivity requires a long-term commitment to a reflexive approach on the part of the researcher(s). It involves challenging one's own (the researcher's) beliefs and perceptions, which are often a result of very different social norms and mores from that of the community being researched. In other words, participatory research is not only participatory in the sense that members of the host community actively take part in shaping the research (defining standards, symbols and ways of representation and interpretation). It is also participatory in the sense that the researcher him/herself is very much a part of the studied field. Hence, ways of inquiry and interaction become crucial to the outcome of the study, where the key concern is establishing mutual trust.

The PRA approach in the case of volunteer tourism could be used to facilitate an understanding of the lifestyle and activities of communities, their expectations of volunteer tourism or specific projects undertaken by volunteer tourists, and what changes could be made to enable them to benefit more fully from volunteer tourism. This process involves the research participants themselves collecting data with facilitated assistance from the researcher. This approach

enables participants to embrace responsibility and assume accountability for their own knowledge and contributions with a view to enhancing self-confidence, independence and an awareness of each individual's full potential (Walt & Rifkin, 1990; IBRD, 1996; Pretty, 1997; IISD, 1999; Campbell, 2001; Bhandari, 2003; Kent, 2005; Maalim, 2006). More significantly, it allows the cultural perspectives of the participant to be expressed through the choice of topics, language and symbols.

PRA techniques give participants a set of visual tools to structure their knowledge and experience across linguistic and cultural boundaries. These tools can be used to explore current volunteer tourism projects, to define local visions for how volunteer tourism could interact (or remain distanced from, if that is the preference of the community) with existing community activities, and to investigate future actions that could be taken by the various stakeholders. The tools themselves (such as land use mapping) can then be used to highlight existing and/or potential conflict and facilitate discussions between communities and volunteer tourism companies or NGOs.

Any form of community-based tourism depends on the support of the local community as well as access to local accommodation, transport infrastructure, medical services and human resources. PRA can be employed to assist local communities (via various representatives) in making decisions about creating, managing and maximizing these important commodities. It can also provide a forum for the development of cooperative and coordinated planning amongst stakeholders. In his study of a conservation-as-development (volunteer tourism) programme at Crater Mountain, Papua New Guinea, West (2008) argues that it is essential that local communities take control of this process, as often they are the only ones who have a deep enough understanding of the various perspectives and issues. At Crater Mountain, West (2008: 605) states that the decision making process surrounding the development of tourism in a traditional mining community was so complex 'that most outsiders really did not understand the village issues when it came to development'.

The use of PRA can be inclusive of the voices of all landowners in a community, assuring their incorporation in the process. The application of PRA has overcome some of the problems of working with communities, minimizing the social fragmentation that can result if the heterogeneity of a community is not recognized. Volunteer tourism can only benefit from being able to adopt this approach to its overall development, particularly when working with communities new to this area where process is as important as other outcomes for long-term viability.

Many community-centred development programmes have been criticized for being too focused on the mistakes, shortcomings, and other negative issues surrounding a community (Grant & Humphries, 2006; Raymond & Hall, 2008a). This image has resulted in an understandable reluctance by many to participate in any form of structured community development evaluation. The AI approach is another form of participatory action research developed in answer to this issue. AI has evolved primarily in the field of organizational

management, specifically as a result of Cooperrider's (1986) doctoral dissertation. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005: 8):

> Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative, co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives life to an organization or a community when it is most effective and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms.

AI focuses upon searching for the good in a community or organization. The goal of AI is to promote respect, equity and empowerment; focus on past, existing and future real-life policies and programmes in a positive way that focuses on what's going right, instead of what's going wrong. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (1999), AI consists of a four-step process:

> Step 1: Discovery – Participants point out the strengths and the positive outcomes of past decisions and successes.
>
> Step 2: Dream – Participants think about what was and is still working. What programmes, policies and actions are currently helping tourism make a positive contribution to community well-being?
>
> Step 3: Design – Participants apply the previous two steps in terms of how these good programmes could construct a positive future.
>
> Step 4: Delivery or Destiny – Participants focus on future sustained implementation of enacting and realizing the programmes and policies that support community well-being.

AI has been applied to a broad range of programmes, organizations and communities (Jain & Triraganon, 2003), including rural tourism development (Raymond and Hall, 2008a; Koster & Lemelin, 2009), and community environmental partnerships (Carnegie *et al*., 2000). Volunteer tourism in local communities might benefit from the use of AI in that rather than focusing on the needs and shortcomings of a community that may benefit from volunteer tourism, it instead highlights what the community can bring to the relationship.

These four examples of measures to evaluate volunteer tourism at the community level are far from exhaustive. Other potential frameworks include, but are not limited to, the ABCD (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), the Community Capitals (Emery & Flora, 2006; Zahra & McGehee, 2013), Sustainable Livelihoods (Scoones, 1998; Ashley, 2000; Tao & Wall, 2009) and Future's Wheel (Benckendorff *et al*., 2009) approaches. Each has advantages and disadvantages; the trick is to explore a wide range of options and to select the approach that fits best with the community and volunteer tourism under scrutiny.