The Routledge Handbook of Community-Based Tourism Management
Concepts, Issues & Implications
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Paradoxes of travelling alone

Publication details
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Published online on: 21 Dec 2020


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Part 4 of this handbook discusses the paradoxes of community-based tourism (CBT) and its initiatives in communities. It primarily focuses on the negative impacts of mass tourism in the destinations/communities visited. It further explores the threats to the place/communities visited in terms of danger to culture and tradition, loss of identity issues, threats to built and natural heritage, and the discomfort of community residents due to the unpleasant activities of tourists visiting their communities. Tourism is not only about positivity; it also has darker sides and, if not handled properly, may lead to negative consequences. So, to shine a light on the other side of the story, this part compiles numerous issues in the form of research papers pertaining to tourism or increased community perspectives. Chapter 26, entitled “Paradoxes of Travelling Alone: Analyzing the Role of Local Community towards Value Creation among Women Travelers in India,” by Parvinder Kour examines the issues faced by solo women travellers in India and how the community can transfer value-added responses and support to retain trust and confidence among women, reflecting their safety and security issues, a huge concern these days.

Looking at another aspect of tourism, i.e., tourism among children, Chapter 27 by Hugues Séraphin and Maximiliano Korstanje, “The Role of Children and Resort Mini-Clubs in Community-Based Tourism,” unravels the complexity of children’s tourism and its real intersection and dialogues with the controversies around the term CBT. In doing so, it locates children in the tourism ecosystem, and even more concretely within the constellations of the CBT ecosystem and Community- Based Festivals (CBF).

Another piece of research conducted by Johnny Coomansingh in Chapter 28, entitled “Saving the Leatherback Turtle in Grande Riviere, Trinidad: Community Engagement at Work,” provides an exemplified view of community engagement through the villagers and other supporting governmental and non-governmental agencies of Grande Riviere (located on the northern coast of Trinidad) that enforced the non-consumption of the meat of the leatherback turtle.

Additionally, in Chapter 29, “Over-tourism in Communities,” Günay Erol and Ebru Düşmezkalender explain the concept of over-tourism and its development process, causes, effects, and precautions with respect to community development and tourism. They provide us with an overview of managing the consequences and effects of over-tourism, which is vital for the sustainability of tourist destinations.
The last chapter of this part, Chapter 30, provides an interesting insight into climate change as a challenge to CBT. Kamrul Hassan and Jannatul Ferdaus’s research, “Rethinking CBT in Response to Climate Change,” outlines how climate change is threatening CBT in developing countries. Rural communities in developing countries, who have many poverty-related problems, such as food security, malnutrition, safe water, and healthcare, are not capable of coping with climate change. The contribution of this research is of vital importance, with its reflection upon mitigation, resilience, and adaptation as approaches to climate change which can be achieved with the support of local and global governance.

Sandeep Kumar Walia
26

PARADOXES OF TRAVELLING ALONE

Analyzing the role of local community towards value creation among women travellers in India

Parvinder Kour

26.1 Introduction

Residents’ role in tourism is significant as their support is key in destination development (Boonsiritomachaip and Phonthanukitithaworn, 2019). To this end, value creation will define the future of tourism, which reflects tourists’ perceptions, equations, and benefits with purchasing the travel services (Lai, 1995). When it comes to travelling alone, women travellers are believed to be more conscious of service values. Another point to consider is that value creation in most practices has been looked at through the lens of businesses, organizations or destination management authorities (Gummerus, 2013), where the role of local community has always been negligible with respect to putting up services with value dimensions.

While travelling, more specifically to a new destination or society, perception about the tourism space adds to travel fears (Wilson and Little, 2008). Interacting with the local community and exchanging ideas have been observed as motivations for solo women travellers; the behavior and reaction of local residents towards these women determines their resistance to the situations and risk factors and future behavioural intentions. Women look to maintain associations with residents beyond their solo trips (Pearce, 2005). Thus, residents’ interactions with and behavior towards tourists acts as a value-added proposition for future behavioural prospects, further supporting tourism planning and management (Su and Wall, 2010).

While travel behavior amongst tourists has been studied, reflecting on their overall experiences and expectations, value dimension for residents has never been much discussed, even though it is, in fact, a crucial part of the guest-host relationship, especially for solo women travellers. Where women travellers are highly susceptible to risks and uncertainties when traveling alone, local community support for travel services adds value for these solo women. Accordingly, the process of creating value in such a segment remains dependent upon the participation of the local community, which is a reflection of hospitality services and the destination’s image in general. According to Grönroos (2007) creating value affects loyalty and in fact enhances the consumer relationship. Thus, the present study aims to analyze the value dimension as an input by the local community towards behavioural prospects among solo women travellers in India.
26.2 Literature review

Sharpely has explained tourism as a source of interaction between the tourists and hosts who are the actual residents of the destination (Sharpley, 2014). Here, the role of local communities has been discussed with respect to destination promotions and development (Timothy and Tosun, 2003). Their behaviour is the ultimate reflection of service experiences and satisfaction among the tourists with whom they interact (Sharpley, 2014; Sfandla and Bjork, 2013, 496). According to Lin, Chen and Filieri (2017), residents’ participation derives the value creation among tourists (Czernek, 2017). In the tourism context, the value for tourists is derived from the tourism experience, i.e., “value in the experience”; the actors involved in tourism including tourists, tourism service providers, residents and other stakeholders and the engagement platform at the destination level, which is the place where tourists visit and residents lead their daily lives. Living at or near a tourism destination means that members of local communities are inevitably impacted by tourism development.

With regards to travel behavior and future travel intentions, as women usually adopt a conscious approach while selecting a destination or revisiting one, a value-driven approach by the resident community may act as a mediator. However, any negative behavior or hostility against tourists may make them wary of being unwelcome or intimidated, which ultimately reflects the value dimension and, hence, may influence the destination image and overall travel behavior (Lin et al., 2017). The positive relationships and value-enhancing concepts lead to satisfactory experiences and positive perceptions towards the host community, and help retain tourists for longer periods, helping to develop a long-term relationship with them (Prentice, Witt and Wydenbach, 1994).

On the other hand, the attitudes and behaviour of the host community are considered a constraint for solo women travellers (Wilson and Little, 2005). In fact, many researchers, like Westwood, Pritchard and Morgan (2000) and Meisch (2009), have drafted their travel experiences with gendered aspects. As such, closer relationships between local residents and tourists tend to generate a favourable view toward the former, thereby creating positive attitudes in the latter towards the destination’s services and its people (Pizam, Uriely and Reichel, 2000). The reaction of residents tends to influence the overall tourism process (Henderson, 2007). The travellers’ positive experience with the destination generates a positive attitude towards destination services and makes them more likely to visit again and opt for services (Hsu and Huang, 2012). In this respect, value creation among consumers focusses on evaluating the consumer’s choices and expectations with services and the practices they adopt while availing them (Gummerus, 2013, 6). When value is generated as an experience and realized internally by the individual, it is ultimately transferred and shared socially with others (Alakoski and Tikkanen, 2016, 105). Thus, a higher intensity of social association between tourists and destination residents leads to satisfaction and loyalty among the former (Yu and Lee, 2014, 227).

More precisely, it is emotional solidarity that explains the relationship between tourists and local residents (Woosnam and Norman, 2010), and generates an affective bond which functions as an influential aspect (Fairley, 2003). In the context of women travellers, who have traditionally expressed security concerns (Plummer, 2017), emotional solidarity acts as an effective way of generating positivity (Simpson, 2017). The study by Ribeiro et al. (2013) is most relevant to this chapter. Looking at international tourists and destinations, another study investigated how emotional solidarity relates to travel satisfaction and destination loyalty. Hammarström (2005) explained it as an affective bond that a person experiences with
Paradoxes of travelling alone

others, described by emotional intimacy and the degree of linkages they share. In fact, the concept has been considered the affective component that connects individuals together and promotes a sense of closeness and attachment (Jacobs and Allen, 2005). Being welcomed and having sympathetic understanding significantly induces travel satisfaction and destination revisit intention among tourists (Ribeiro et al., 2013). In other words, the interactions between hosts and guests are associated with usage and cooperation procedures (Alakoski and Tikkanen, 2016).

26.3 Objectives

Understanding the patterns of associations between elements and the assessment of the structure that has evolved between tourists and the community is crucial (Baggio, 2011). To this end, the present study aims to analyze the antecedents of value creation through community involvement, in the specific context of solo women travellers in India.

26.4 Research methods

To fulfil the objective of the study, and to analyze the role of residents in increasing their intentions to travel among solo women travellers in India, a survey of solo women travellers was conducted. A naturalistic inquiry method was adopted to better understand how women travellers evaluated their experiences as this helps explain the societal context of human experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1999, 880). Interview methods were applied to collect responses regarding the research questions. To ensure more authentic responses, purposive sampling was utilized; women who travelled to India at least once were targeted as interviewees as they could explain their experiences with solo travelling best. For the purpose of this data, both pre- and post-trip interviews were conducted to analyze what the women expected of and how they experienced their solo travel as well as their expectations and perceptions of residents/local communities in India.

To maintain the ethics of the research, the women’s identities were not disclosed, and the respondents were coded by P1 to P10. The interviews were recorded and in some cases were conducted via telephone. Gathered information was recorded and further transcribed. Most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 25–35 years (six participants), whereas the rest were in the age group of 18–24. As far as the occupations of the respondents are concerned, seven of them were employed and three were students. The sorting of other respondents for the interviews was performed with the help of P1, who helped select respondents via snowball sampling checking.

The reliability and validity of the questions was checked with the help of experts and qualitative and content analysis. The process of card sorting was performed as this is reliable technique for defining methodical patterns available in the content collected during the survey (Dautenhahn and Ghauoi, 2014). The application of this technique was conducted with a view to confirm the relevance and validation of the study methods and the data retained.

26.5 Analysis and interpretations

As a result of the conducted interviews, the experiential construction of the interactions between solo women travellers and local community people was determined where cultural
understanding and social negotiation is recognized as the process of adjusting to the challenges that occur during travel. Case 1 in the interview revealed it as:

In my visit to India I have met people with different culture with different values and customs from me. I realized the values and customs needs some significant approaches by the women especially while travelling alone. You need to adopt some practices and customs meant for women not only to be indulging by the culture but also be safe against their negative thoughts for you.

Another respondent considered it (solo travelling) a procedure where they have attained their aspirations and desires for travelling solo:

Travelling solo helps me to meet people from diverse culture. It helps me indulge more independently into destination cultures and it always makes [me] adore their ethnicity and culture and make me more confident being alone.

Travelling make me to enjoy the culture and in fact every aspect of travelling on my own and make me to get indulge with the activities more freely and independently.

The motivation for travelling in India starts with an appreciation of its societal norms, recognizing the differences. It also helps to generate a respect for them, and understanding for new cultural norms, which can be seen here:

Different cultures have different norms which processes our thoughts and societal interactions.

Every time I visit to new place, I found the differentiation among the living standards and ethnicity. Moving beyond all the differences and visiting again and again here I am able to get better understanding and experiences with all of them.

The respondents were also asked about their value propositions with respect to local residents when they visit Indian destinations.

Difference in the value settings between the travelers and host community was found among women travellers who were visiting destinations for the first time, thereby reflecting the conditional limitations of relationships with community people:

At first, while travelling solo it is quite tricky for us to maintain the relationship with residents especially for when women traveller who are total unfamiliar with the destination. You may feel lost as you may find it difficult to whom to trust and rely upon even for seeking simple information.

[The] feeling of risk and danger in a strange destination always remains.

A solidarity behaviour by local people played a crucial component for change in attitude along with overcoming the depressing and critical situations that are likely to emerge during the travel. The most significant outcome of solidarity is that it tends to alter futuristic behavior in terms of loyalty and revisit intentions. Thus, a comprehensive change in value propositions and attitude dimensions in a wider range is possible as the tourists feel close to and are able to create cordial relations with local residents. The main attributes here are identified as:
26.5.1 Welcoming nature

The welcoming gesture[s] of the locals at the destinations makes me feel comfortable in the new environment and of course induce[s] trust.

Their behavior made me feel more comfortable and the way they respond[ed] to us no longer made me feel anxious or insecure.

I think it reflects the culture and trust factor they have in us and increased level [of] acceptance of [us] as we are…. it reflects their thought process for us.

26.5.2 Sympathetic understanding

We expect a sympathetic and kind behavior [from] local people.

It is generally unexpected but more impressive. It helps me to create a better linkage and understanding with local people.

26.5.3 Emotional closeness

I felt affectionate to the people where I visited.

I expect the residents to be free of their thoughts and respect the way we are.

It is like that residents are friendly and open-minded to independent and solo women travelers.

We usually anticipate services rendering bonds and respect as everything in there looks new and unknown to us.

Trust, closeness, and affection stimulate links and bonds; however, indifference has been reported by some respondents as limiting these. Understanding the perception of tourists as aware or unaware of residents’ norms and ethics is important.

Analysis revealed that social interactions among residents and women travellers can be a part of a philosophical, relative, or inclusive experience that leads travellers to draw perceptions not only for themselves but of the destinations as well. These results propose that relationship enhancement of tourism can lead to an understanding of humanity and the promotion of shared values among people.

26.6 Conclusion and implications

This research has explored the structure of interactions and value dimensions among solo women travellers and the local community, and these items’ influence on travellers’ revisiting destinations in India. Accordingly it was observed that they define concepts of shared beliefs, understanding relations, and interaction with local community residents as factors that influence their emotional solidarity with residents.

Solo women travellers look for status, independence, emotional closeness, and support to overcome situational restrictions in the tourism system. Eventually, local interactions, by means of emotional support, solidarity, and comprehensive experiences, affectively influence the women’s attitudes towards the local community and towards the idea of revisiting the destination. By applying the framework of value and emotional solidarity to behavioural learning, this study helps examine a much deeper understanding of the guest-host relationship that exists between the local community and solo women travellers. The results also suggested that emotional support and being welcomed by local people results in developing
Parvinder Kour

a cordial relationship and makes travellers feel special, which also made them consider revisiting the destination (Woosnam, 2008, 224). While women travellers do look for differentiated cultures and experiences they feel that when residents support them it makes them feel welcomed. Although they don’t expect this to happen, it may add to their trust and loyalty towards the residents and destinations, and make them feel appreciated as they are.

It is considerable that this research builds upon the knowledge of prior, associated studies and draws a directional approach for future research in this domain. In relation to content, this research will help promote the comprehensive knowledge of the structure and the sense of local interactions between women solo travellers and local residents in India. It also helps in providing a phenomenal understanding with the behavioral aspects, a collective structural body of interactions. Second, this research contributes to the expansion of the academic domain and the growth of directions in methodology for subsequent research. It identifies the qualitative aspects of the experience of linkage between women travellers and local community people as a dynamic of travel behavior and service experience drawing an emotional value associated with it. Overall, the study contributes to the field by creating a foundation for societal theory that can elucidate the essential aspects of the interaction in tourism and defines collective structure of the value dimensions for travel experience.

26.7 Limitations

The present research focusses on tourists, but the value dimensions with respect to the local residents was not examined. The response of the local community towards solo women travellers would be a valuable contribution to such research.

Since the study was conducted with the help of qualitative methodology, quantitative methodology can be applied to analyze the reliability of the results so as to retain more directive development with the research constructs. The differences in the tourists’ backgrounds may also have influenced the results; this is a reasonable direction for future researchers as backgrounds may reflect and influence tourists’ behavior and their expectations of a destination community.

References


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