

Community Participation in Tourism Decision Making Process: A Case Study of Arugam Bay, Sri Lanka

C. N. R. Wijesundara

Department of Tourism Management, Faculty of Management Studies
Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka.
namalsusl@yahoo.com

This study focuses on the local community participation in the tourism development process of Arugam Bay in Sri Lanka as a popular surfing destination. Participation in the decision-making process is a crucial determinant in ensuring that the benefits accrued by local communities from tourism are guaranteed. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the level of community participation in tourism decision making process. The study utilized a case study approach, which offers: exploration at the community level to analyze the issue from the grass root level. Participation of diverse stakeholders (Local government institutes, NGOs, Tourism entrepreneurs, the members of community, and tourism professionals) and the use of mix methodology by using multiple data collection techniques such as household questionnaire surveys, stakeholders' interviews, and personal observations have improved the validity and reliability of the results and effectively answer the main research question. This study concluded that, there was an induced participation of the local community in the tourism decision making process in Sri Lanka. Under the induced community participation, the host community is normally involving in moderate level with decision-making process and they don't have any power to make sure that their thoughts are considered for implementations. The paper contributes to the wider scientific discussion on community participation in tourism industry, and reveals vital insight for tourism planners, policy makers and decision makers.

Keywords: Community Participation; Tourism Decision Making; Tourism Development