



Factors influencing the involvement of locals in CBT in a migratory birds' sanctuary

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the factors influencing local communities' participation in ecotourism development initiatives. The study examines a small-scale ecotourism initiative - Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust (MET) known as one of the best migratory birds' sanctuary located in India. A survey method was adopted to collect quantitative primary data through a semi-structured questionnaire among 174 local community members employed by the Mangalajodi Ecotourism Organization. The analytical results identified three factors influencing local community's participation (Community based tourism) in ecotourism, classified as community economic development, destination development and sustainable development. Principle Compound Analysis was performed among these three factors to find the significance among these factors. Based on these factors, *k mean cluster analysis* was performed to establish the variables that strongly influences participation of local communities in ecotourism development. Thus, this study widens the understanding of community based ecotourism initiatives for community development. From this study, it is concluded that local community members have a positive perception towards the development of community based ecotourism organizations. It is recommended that ecotourism organizations should exploit the existing development opportunities and adopt appropriate strategies for sustainability of the ecotourism initiatives and destinations. The findings could hopefully inform future tourism development decisions and strategies for this and similar tourism ventures.

Keywords: Community based ecotourism (CBT), sustainability, community participation, ecotourism, Destination development.

Introduction

Tourism has been growing rapidly over the past few decades. Within the tourism industry, ecotourism is considered a key sector for improvement of socio-economic conditions of local communities (Tisdell & Wilson, 2005; Tichaawa, 2017). Some international organizations have for many years considered ecotourism as a tool for conservation of environment towards sustainable development (UNWTO, TIES, UN Environmental Programme, Ramsar Conservation, UN Conference on Sustainable Development). As a result, ecotourism has been a focus of discussions on protection and conservation the environment. Tseng et al. (2019) argue that ecotourism provides long term benefits to local communities in terms of economic development,



environmental conservation, society and attraction of the destination. In modern society, community based ecotourism organizations play a major role of rural development. However, many ecotourism based organizations fail due to lack of appropriate guidance (Masud et al., 2017). The guidance of tourism potential is necessary for tourist attraction development (Lee & Jan, 2019). The tourism potential is considered in terms of accommodation, accessibility, activities, amenities, attraction and the value of the service and wealth of property within the community or destination that can be converted into tourist attraction or product.

Destination enchantment is also considered as a tourism potential. Ecotourism destination with diverse environmental benefits influences tourists' decisions when choose their trip. Tseng et al. (2019) and Ocampo et al. (2018) suggest that ecotourism destinations have greater value considering the following definition: "Environmentally reasonable travel to natural areas that conserved the environment, improve the wellbeing of natural areas and including interpretation and education in addition to the leisure activities need to satisfy the tourists" (TIES, 2019). Furthermore, ecotourism contributes to sustainable tourism development. It allows for the distribution of revenue to undeserved areas, while ensuring tourism revenue stay within the destination for the communities that engage in it. A community participation in ecotourism destination is an integral part of sustainable tourism development. According to Okazaki (2008) community participation includes sharing knowledge and the transformation of the process of learning towards self-development. Lee and Jan (2019) and Kummitha (2020) contend that community participation is a process of involving all stakeholders in such a way decision and planning related activities are shared.

A number of researchers still doubt whether local communities get maximum benefits from the ecotourism destination (Jones, 2005; Ashok et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2014). According Zacarias and Loyola (2017) local communities gain merely small, spasmodic cash from ecotourism. The local elites, outside operators, and government agencies are the ones who get most of the profits. Due to a lack of capital and/or appropriate skills, only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefits from ecotourism, while others cannot find a way to share in these economic benefits. Also, local communities seem not to fully adhere to governments ecotourism-related polices unless the project addresses their socio-economic issues (Masud et al., 2017). Oduor, (2020) observes that ecotourism enterprises are only successful if community member have control over the destination and share benefits fairly. Effective ecotourism destination plans and policies facilitate formation of partnerships with different stakeholders in ecotourism development. Hence, ecotourism planning is the main pillar for ecotourism development because through planning, some of the local community members take initiative to protect and develop the destination (Byrd, 2007; Vincent & Thompson, 2002). If ecotourism destinations are not planned properly it could destroy every resources (economic, environmental, and social) of the destination. Participation of local communities in planning and decision making activities helps to sustainably use environmental resources that minimize the negative human-generated effects of on the environment.

Thus, it is acknowledged that ecotourism promotes sustainability with environmental conservation, economic development and socio-cultural diversification as primary objectives. Therefore, this study sort to analyse local community's perception on participating in community based ecotourism approach to tourism development. The study used the case of Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust. Principle Component Analysis was performed to find the inter-relations among the variables on community perception, as well as to identify the community economic development, destination development and sustainable development factors. This analysis reveals the reasons behind the support enjoyed by this classic example of an ecotourism community based organization.



Literature Review

Ecotourism and Community Participation

The inclusion of local communities in tourism has featured in literature since 1980s. Local residents are regarded as a key resource in sustaining the product (Stone & Stone, 2011). Adopted by 178 countries at the Rio Summit in 1992, Agenda 21 promotes rural community participation to maximize the rural community's ability to control and manage its resources (Van Rooyen, 2004). Ecotourism significantly contributes in community development. It raises awareness on the problems faced by the community thereby creating networks for communities so that more people can participate in development of destinations (Farmer & Kilpatrick, 2009). This form of tourism strives to meet the needs of the community by utilizing natural resources to achieve its objectives. Through it, local communities explore innovative ways to harness tourism to support the traditional elements of their land-based economy, apart from conserving the local environment (Notzke, 1999). Vincent and Thompson's (2002) article on community support on ecotourism development suggests that communities play major roles in destination development and environmental protection. The authors identify four key factors necessary for community participation in ecotourism development as: i) providing environmental awareness for local community ii) availing educational training opportunities for local communities iii) giving sustainable economic support to communities and iv) formulating ethical and moral conservational guidelines and regulations. These factors represent the local communities' ecotourism benefits. It therefore follows that the sustainability of ecotourism has a direct relationship to local communities' support for goals and objectives of ecotourism organizations. It is imperative to consider communities while undertaking all planning for the development in ecotourism destinations (Stone & Stone, 2011). However, there is still need for investigations on reasons behind the support enjoyed by ecotourism ventures from local community members, leading to outstanding success these businesses.

Community Economic Development through Ecotourism

Ecotourism as a sustainable natural land use option assist in economic development (Synman, 2014). Its potential to offer a viable and sustainable natural land use alternative in remote rural areas is realized in employment and income impact (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010). From their study based on six African countries, Coria and Calfucura (2012) discovered that rural households are relying heavily on the market economy, largely in the form of ecotourism, for support. Their study on the impact of ecotourism employment on rural household incomes and overall social welfare revealed the important role that ecotourism employment play in economic development in remote, rural areas. Usually, ecotourism benefits are spread beyond simple direct employment when ecotourism employees spend their salaries buying goods and services from other community members (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). As is widely acknowledged, ecotourism has a high multiplier effect (Mearns, 2003). For instance, money spent tourists on hotel accommodation, food and beverages, shopping, entertainment and transport, provides an income to hotel staff, taxi operators, shop keepers and suppliers of goods and services (Bansal and Kumar, 2011). Hence money accruing from tourism circulates through numerous segments of the economy through the multiplier process.

A study by Juma and Khademi-Vidra (2019) confirmed that ecotourism creates a market for local crafts and produce, creates jobs, supports local shops and services, attracts investment into an area, and increases demand for local cultural activities and amenities. This indicates that the benefits from ecotourism, though small in absolute terms, play an important role in increasing the



means of living of indigenous communities often characterized by poverty and exclusion (Lindsey et al., 2005; Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010). The cash income from ecotourism has the potential to stimulate income diversification and risk management among households (Lapeyre, 2010; Stronza, 2009). It has the potential of replacing many traditional livelihood activities that damaged the environment (hunting, gathering, livestock, and crop farming) when it becomes the main livelihood activity of the members of these communities (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010). Ecotourism also has a positive effect on land value; the value of ecotourism-controlled land is higher than that of land used for other activities like logging, ranching, or agriculture. Finally, financial and physical capital obtained from ecotourism also serves as a safety net in case of unfortunate events and unforeseen expenses (Lepper & Schroenn, 2010).

Therefore, the support of community members for the ecotourism enterprises established in their locality is critical to the success of the ventures. Negative perceptions among local residents may hinder their support for ecotourism development, while positive perceptions will secure their support for ecotourism (Lee, 2019). In particular, economic benefits and the knowledge of these benefits positively affect what the local people believe about the importance and the future success of ecotourism in their region (Dimanche & Smith, 1996; 1997).

Destination Development through Ecotourism

Destinations benefit from ecotourism through the improvement of collective infrastructures and provision of local public goods (Juma & Khademi-Vidra, 2019). For example, income from ecotourism has been used to enhance water supply and provide housing to community households, as well as support for local sports activities and assistance for orphans and disabled people (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010). In terms of destination publicity, improvement in the infrastructure and opening up to the outside world for ecotourism destinations such as Viscri, have made them relatively well-known villages, being cited in most tourist guidebooks (Iorio & Corsale, 2014). Researches have also confirmed positive impacts of ecotourism on the revalorisation of local traditions and farming among the locals as well as a growing hope for a better future through provision of new inputs, options and aspirations, as well as optimism towards the future (Zapata et al., 2011).

Further, ecotourism forges networks which directly tackle some of the main problems in the destination like lack of education and business experience and low level of democratic participation (Iorio & Corsale, 2014). Local communities in the holy Hindi city of Haridwar, that participate in the avitourism projects and serve as guides for avitourism, experience competence building and they get to feel empowered (Nicolaidis, 2013). However, generally, communities are prevented from participating, especially marginal ones, and they cannot undertake tourism initiatives. The networks where they exist, also provide the community with bridging and bonding relations within the community that facilitated the destination development process. Networking is further evident when local guesthouse owners informally exchange guests among the different accommodation according to availability. Tourism also forges positive linkages with agriculture whereby villages even sell their products to the guesthouses.

Through ecotourism, education for children and training for adults are facilitated to enable achieving and enhancing essential skills (Juma & Khademi-Vidra, 2019). Training courses in tourism and in other fields are organised for community members, to the point of obtaining certification to start independent enterprises. The net effect include strengthening of local skills, knowledge, and information. Ecotourism has a positive effect on land value, whereby the value of ecotourism-controlled land is higher than that of land used for other activities like logging, ranching, or agriculture (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010). It allows for re-investment back to the



community an example being 10% for UCA San Ramo´n and UCA Tierra y Agua in Nicaragua (Zapata et al., 2011).

Sustainable Development through Ecotourism

Ecotourism has the potential of replacing many traditional livelihood activities that damage the environment (hunting, gathering, livestock, and crop farming) when it becomes the main livelihood activity of the members of these communities (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2010). One of the main gains of ecotourism regarding the environment is the raising of awareness regarding nature and heritage conservation and improvements in water and waste management and the production of alternative energies. Bansal and Kumar (2011) report a rise in awareness of the economic importance of the preservation of cultural and natural heritage in some ecotourism destinations. This leads to preservation of national monuments, preservation of local culture and protection of flora and fauna. Nicolaidis and Vettori (2019) argue that how organizations and people treat one another in their approach to nature, is critical to sustainable business in an environment which is progressively susceptible to malpractices such as disdain for others who should be incorporated into ecotourism initiatives.

Robust ecotourism generates money for conservation and preservation of natural and cultural heritage, from the site entry fee charged to ecotourists. Further to providing money for enhancing conservation of environment in the destination, opportunity for volunteer tourism (voluntourism) can be presented for ecotourists who fall in love with the sites they visit to the point of offering beneficial charity services (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018). Voluntourism is a form of tourism in which travellers contribute in voluntary work, and this is an enormous impetus for sustainable development (Zoe & Ali, 2010).

Study site

Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust (MET) is a community owned and managed tourism venture promoted by Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) Foundation India and Indian Grameen Services (IGS) on the banks of Chilika Lake in Odisha. This organization promotes both environmental conservation and community welfare efforts. Mangalajodi village is inhabited by poachers-turned-conservationists, who were once known for poaching birds and selling them to nearby markets. This had earned Mangalajodi the name “Poachers village”. Some of the local communities took initiative towards the protection of the migratory birds and multidimensional constructs of their empowerment. The study was conducted in this Mangalajodi village located in Chilika region of Odisha in eastern India (Fig 1). India is a developing country with most of its tourism activities controlled by the Ministry of Tourism, India. A few tourism enterprises in India are maintained by community based ecotourism organizations. MET was chosen for the case study because of three specific reasons: i) Mangalajodi is a renowned ecotourism site known for its marshes and waterfowl congregations. The wetland of Mangalajodi hosts over 250 species of birds during the seasons (March to September), of which 125 are migratory birds. ii) the local people are reformed former bird poachers, who two decades back, were associated with illegal wanton poaching of birds but now have changed towards the protection of the birds and iii) Mangalajodi Ecotourism Organisation has been actively engaged in adopting a specific strategy to the development of ecotourism.

Methodology



This study was limited to the one case study selected by the researchers (MET) and therefore the findings may not be generalised to other ecotourism organizations. Systematic sampling method was used to identify the local community members around MET who were involved in the Mangalajodi organization. A semi-structured questionnaire survey was conducted among local community members at Mangalajodi village. The researcher developed set of questions to understand the objective of the study. The proposed questionnaire contains two sections. First sections deal with demographic characteristics of local communities (See table:1) and second section has items design to measure factors of the study by using open and close-ended Three point Likert scale questions ranged from 1-disagree to 3- agree. A total of 15 items divided in to 3 factors based on correction of the factors. Three scale factors identified as Community economic development, works of Lee and Jan (2019), Sustainable development Muresan et al. (2016), and Destination development Wickens, Bakir and Alvarez, (2015) respectively. Detailed analysis results of each factor are as indicated in (Table 2). Data collection took four months, with the researchers staying in the Mangalajodi region from September 2017 to December 2017. During this period, the researchers observed types and forms of tourism-related facilities and the daily activities. By end of the field work researcher able to collect (n= 174) respondents.

When it comes to data analysis the Descriptive statistics such as (e.g. Percentage of Respondents and Cronbach's alpha and Factor analysis) were analysed by using statistical software of IBM SPSS version 25 for Windows 10. Before initiating data analysis researcher done data preparation based on the completed questionnaire survey by given coding, editing, entering and clearing unnecessary data. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument by using convergent and discriminant validity of Community economic development, Sustainable development, and Destination development, scores were evaluated and verified.

Results

Local communities Demographics

Demographics of the local members are presented in the below Table 1. Based on the sample reached, there were more male (54.4%) than female (45.6%). The youngest community member sampled was 19 years old and the oldest was 62 years old. Within the age groups, 17.1% were of the 15-25 years age bracket and the age group 25- 40 years was the largest age group representing 40% of total sample. The age group 40–50 years, considered as second largest represented 26.7% of total respondents. Local community members above 50 years of age considered as oldest represented 16.2% of the total sample. Literacy levels appeared to pose a challenge to the local community development. Most of the respondents had pass out from high school (43.3%) and 30% of the respondents were basic school graduates. The remaining 26.7% of the respondents had no formal education, indicating lack of educational awareness in rural areas.

Table1. Characteristics of local communities (N=174)

Items	%
Gender	
Male	54.4
Female	45.6
Status	
Married	20
Single	78.9



Others	1.1
Age	
15-25	17.1
25-40	40
40-50	26.7
>50	16.2
Education Qualification	
School	30
High School	43.3
No formal Education	26.7
Annual Household Income	
<30000 INR	52.2
30000-75000 INR	32.2
> 75000	15.5

Source: Researchers' data

Household Income and Employment

The annual household income of the local community members revealed three extreme cases: Low income residents represented 52% and earned 30000 INR (390 USD) during high tourism seasons. The Middle income represented 32.2% and earned between 30000-75000 INR (390 to 979 USD) depending on tourist arrival during tourism seasons. Lastly, high income earners represented 15.5% of local community members and earned more than 75,000 INR (979 USD) per year. All local community members considered tourism as a secondary income source for their livelihood. 80% of the respondents secured seasonal employments during high tourism season while 20% of the respondents were on permanent employment in the enterprise. This indicates that this community based ecotourism organization did not provide sufficient employment opportunities for local people.

Factors influencing local communities' perception on MET

In order to identify the factors that influenced local people's perception on this ecotourism enterprise development, a Principle Factor Analysis was carried out. The adequacy of the sample size and suitability of the data was confirmed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). Bartlett's Test was also conducted to verify the normality and significance of the conducted analyses and it was found to be significant (at $p < 0.05$). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (chi-square 88.043). The KMO overall measure of sampling is 0.55, indicating that this data is suitable to use the Principal Component Analysis (Kaiser, 1974). This analysis was also used to refine the scale and some of the items with low commonalities were eliminated. Detailed analysis results of each factor are as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Principal factor analysis on local people's perception on MET

Eigen value	%	α	Factors	Variables	Pattern Matrix	Commun alities
				MET provide full time employment opportunity for local communities?	0.551	0.634
				I have economic attachment with this organization and it improves economic conditions of my family	0.712	0.719
				Initiates viable projects to solve socio-economic problems of local communities and protect the environment	0.675	0.734



				Encourage local community's participation in planning and decision making process of destination development?	0.785	0.814
4.44	29.6	.768	Community Economic Development	Encourage local talent, arts and crafts in communities	0.749	0.617
				Increase job opportunities during low tourism season for local communities	0.653	0.749
				I am willing to put all my efforts in this organization to make my place better ecotourism spot	0.659	0.675
				MET will bring more development and more tourist to your areas	0.681	0.899
				Without MET organization your communities members are able to handle tourism development	0.537	0.721
				Local communities perception about MET contribution to inflation	0.665	0.876
1.86	12.4	.825	Sustainable Development	Encourage preservation of cultural resource of the destination	0.77	0.657
				Increases the support of conservation for natural resource and provide environmental education awareness to local communities	0.651	0.893
				MET provide alternative approach to mass tourism without hurting the quality of the destination?	0.731	0.723
1.44	9.63	.805	Destination Development	MET encourages the hosting of eco-friendly events and development recreation park	0.725	0.624
				Improvement of accessibility and accommodation facilities bringing tourist to your area	0.582	0.657

%= Average Variance explained, α , Cronbach's alpha

Source: Researchers' data

The first factor assigned for community development represented 29.6% variance. The variables involved attributes that related to local community's perception about community development in through MET activities. These variables are: encouraging local community's participation in planning and decision making process of destination development (0.785 Pattern Matrix), encouraging local talent arts and crafts in the community (0.749 Pattern Matrix), and economic attachment with MET and it improving the economic conditions of families (0.712 Pattern Matrix). The second factor was assigned for sustainable development and represented 12.4% variance. The variables involved attributes that related to local communities perception about MET and sustainable development of the ecotourism destination.

These variables were: encouraging conservation of environmental and cultural resource of the destination (0.770 Pattern Matrix), local community's perception sustainable development (0.665 Pattern Matrix), increases the support for conservation of natural resource and provide environmental education awareness to local communities (0.651 Pattern Matrix). The third factor was assigned for destination development and it represented 9.63% variance. The variables involved attributes that relate to local communities perception about MET and destination development. These variables included: providing alternative approach to mass tourism without hurting the quality of destination (0.731 Pattern Matrix), encouraging hosting of eco-friendly events such as festivals and environmental awareness programmes (0.725 Pattern Matrix),



improving better accessibility and accommodation attracting tourists to the area (0.582 Pattern Matrix).

The results of simple correlation analysis on the factors in support of community development, sustainable development, and destination development are listed in Table 3. Community development factor ($r=.226^* p < 0.01$), Sustainable development ($r = -.131^{**} p < 0.01$), Destination development ($r=1.0 p < 0.01$) were significantly correlated with local community's support for MET development. This outcome is in contrast to other researches, which established that enterprises' purpose of facilitating community economic development is more preferable (Wallace, 1999; Ratten, Welpe and Dana, 2010) and environmental sustainability of the destinations (Schaper, 2016), along with rural destination development (Mottiar et al., 2018).

Table 3. Correlation analysis of each factor with the support for MET development.

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	CD	SD	DD	P-Value
Community Development	3.5	0.39	1.0			0.000
Sustainable Development	3.1	0.48	.226*	1.0		0.000
Destination development	3.4	0.37	.108	-.131**	1.0	0.235

* Significant at 0.05; ** Significant at 0.01.

Source: Researchers' data

Cluster analysis of Components That Influence Community Perception on MET

Cluster analysis revealed that the main factors which influence the local community's participation in this ecotourism organisation were: community development, sustainable development and destination development. The discussion about these three factors is presented below (Table 4). In establishing how these components contribute to ecotourism destination development through MET, the percentage of local community members showing similar interests on the various components was calculated. These components were: involvement in decisions, encouraging local talent, improving the economic conditions of locals, increasing the tourism products marketing, environmental conservation, destination development, and environmental awareness programmes.

A *K mean cluster analysis* was performed by aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24. Three-cluster solution was chosen because it provides best interpretable solutions for considerable factors. Positive means indicate a high level of influence of local community perception on MET ecotourism organisation, while negative means indicate the low level of influence of local community perception on MET ecotourism organisation. This is when the local community influence is considered through the seven-factor. The seven components represented in this analysis are: Involvement of local communities in decisions, encouraging local talent, improving economic conditions of locals, increasing the tourism products marketing, environmental conservation, destination development, and environmental awareness programs.

Table 4. Three Cluster Centres

Components	Cluster 1=26	Cluster 2=35	Cluster 3=110
Involvement of local community's decisions	-0.92181	-0.7131	0.46777
Encourage local talent	-1.05457	-0.53653	0.44695
Improve economic conditions of locals	-1.28798	-0.54422	0.5108
Increase the tourism products marketing	-0.79488	-1.18535	0.5835



Environmental conservation	-0.90641	-0.77457	0.48313
Destination development	-0.33354	-1.01915	0.40961
Environmental awareness programmes	-1.45926	-0.22336	0.45455

Source: Researchers' data

The first and the lowest of all clusters (N= 26; 16.66%) representing local community members employed by the Mangalajodi Ecotourism organization. For this case, Mangalajodi environmental awareness programs component is considered of greatest level (mean -1.45926) in influencing local community perception on local communities as a MET organization. It strongly suggests that. Since this cluster relates to environmental ideology, it is deduced that MET organization mainly supported on the premise of *environmental awareness*.

The second cluster considered the second-lowest cluster (N= 35; 20%) also had the same seven components considered. The components represented are: Involvement of local communities in decisions, encouraging local talent, improving economic conditions of locals, increasing the tourism products marketing, environmental conservation, destination development, and MET environmental awareness programs. these seven, "Increasing the tourism products marketing" component had the greatest level (mean -1.18535), of influence on local community's perception on MET organization. This cluster relates to better tourism marketing ideology, strongly suggesting that in cluster 2, the main influencing component for supporting ecotourism development is *tourism product marketing*.

The third cluster was the largest cluster (N= 110; 63.33%) and was composed of the same seven components. The component on '*Destination development*' had the highest influence component (mean 0.40961) on local community's perception on MET as an ecotourism organization. This cluster indicates that the organisation takes better consideration of local communities' decisions. This means that through cluster 3, it is deduced that MET is mainly supported on the premise of the component of '*Destination development*'.

Discussion

This study had the objective of determining the local community's perception on participation in a community based ecotourism organization for ecotourism development. The findings of the study indicated the factors influencing CBT for development of rural areas through ecotourism that may help to improve local community's economic conditions and preserve the environment. Ecotourism development is widely lauded to provide better quality of life to local communities especially through employment opportunities and improving infrastructural development (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014).

This study results indicate that Mangalajodi Trust involves the local community directly in its operations and improves the economy, wellbeing of local community and preserves local resources in a sustainable way. Local people are involved in decision-making process. The enterprise attracts more tourist in this rural area as well as stimulating the creation of more infrastructure facilities. Their involvement is also essential in order to achieve the numerous conservation and development goals of ecotourism. The local community therefore supports ecotourism because they consider the economic benefits for their livelihoods. It is however important that Mangalajodi ecotourism organization to consider involving them at all levels of ecotourism development from planning to operation and low skill activities as recommended by Aquino et al. (2018); Muresan et al. (2016). Findings also strongly indicated that local people



supported Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust for implementing environmental awareness programs for its members. Most importantly, the local community was willing to embrace sustainable methods of tourism development because they had learnt from environmental educational programs. In addition, this study ascertained that the environmental awareness programmes, regular patrolling and heavy imposition of fines by MET were necessary for environmental protection to discourage 'hardcore' offenders from committing encroachment offences. These efforts could be made more efficient if the relevant government agencies would coordinate their efforts, streamline their operations and avoid overlapping programs and inconsistency of policies to support sustainable development.

Ecotourism is widely considered as an avenue to sustainable destination development. Within the MET community, it has not only promoted economic development but also transformed the destination in terms of infrastructure and social facility development. Road transport networks have been improved, making it efficient for movement of people and transportation of goods. Accommodation facilities, resorts and recreation sites are among the social facilities that are now available as a result of new investments opportunities in the destination because of ecotourism. This observation in MET community corresponds to the notion that ecotourism is able to spur economic development and instils environmental protection at the same time (Kiper, 2013). In the process, land and other natural resources in the destination are put into proper use for development.

Conclusion and recommendations

Using the case of Mangalajodi to analyse factors that influence local community's perception on community based ecotourism organizations, the views of local people revealed three strong premises for support. One strong factor was involvement of local community's decisions in the development of the destination. This is because this involvement directly improves the economy of the destination, which improves the wellbeing of local community and preserve local resources in a sustainable way. The second reason for support was based on environmental awareness programmes. Findings strongly indicated that Mangalajodi trust was implementing environmental awareness programs for community members. Most importantly, the local community was willing to embrace sustainable methods of tourism development because they learn from environmental educational programs. The third factor was related to harnessing of the local talent. The results of this study indicated that the venture used local talent to offer services to tourists visiting the destination. This is due to the fact that encouraging local talent in Mangalajodi organizations help to create more employment opportunities for local communities. It is therefore imperative that community development, sustainable development and destination development are key areas that enterprises such as ecotourism ventures should seek to address. This knowledge is paramount in expanding research in the context of India, and in other developing countries.

Further research in this case area could be conducted to establish the type of stakeholders collaborating in MET development and the level of their involvement in this venture. Moreover, since this study has environmental conservation as one of its core agenda items, there is need for a study to determine the extent to which local people have adopted environmental friendly practices learnt from this organization. Other topics of interest include quantifying the economic impact and destination transformation that can directly be attributed to MET. Lastly, it should be in the interest of researchers to find out the level of decision-making process which local community members are involved and extent of their involvement in the decision-making process.

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