

Assessing Community Leadership Factor in Community Capacity Building in Tourism Development: A Case Study of Shiraz, Iran

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KEYWORDS Leadership. Tourism. Community Capacity Building. Local Communities

ABSTRACT The main purpose of the study is to assess the level of community leadership for community capacity building in tourism development. Six indicators were used to measure community leadership at the community level in the context of tourism development. Findings show that the level of community leadership as a factor of community capacity building is low. However the level in the old district is higher than the new district of Shiraz. t-test also shows that there is a significant difference between the level of community leadership in local communities in new Shiraz and the old Shiraz.

INTRODUCTION

Many local communities recognize that tourism can stimulate change in social, cultural and environmental dimensions, where tourism activities have had a close connection with the local communities (Beeton 2006, Richards and Hall 2000). Moreover, many view tourism as a tool for community development, especially in the local area. Community leadership is one aspect of the tourism development strategies found in local communities. Leaders play a vital role in addressing tourism development and represent a mechanism for community capacity building for tourism development. Community capacity building does not happen without intentional effort. A critical element in both community capacity building and tourism development is community leadership required to bring the key community players together, to capture their imagination and to energize them to action. Without community leadership, community capacity building and development of tourism do not occur (Austen 2003). Bolton (1991), Kirk and Kraft (2004) and Mills (2005) contend that fostering community leadership to help make communities better places to live be one of the primary purposes of community development. This study aims to determine the role of community leaders in community capacity building for tourism development. Local communities in Shiraz have never been studied in such a way. Thus, there is limited understanding of development of

leadership for tourism development in local communities and also very few research has been done here on the process of tourism in Iran. Hence the purpose of this study is to examine community leadership toward tourism development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The context of interest for this study is community leadership, and there have been several sociological definitions outlined within this context. Wilkinson (1986) defines community leadership as an action enacted by individuals who make specific and distinctive contributions to community action. One of the most current definitions of community leadership comes from Goepfinger (2002) who views it as an interactive process between individuals within a common locale.

Community leadership is a specific form of the general concept of leadership. It is frequently based in place and so is local, although it can also represent a community of common interest, purpose or practice. In many localities it is provided by a combination of local volunteers, business and government (Sorenson and Epps 1996; Andersen et al. 2002; Osborne and Gaebler 1993). The importance and need for community leadership in community capacity building cannot be ignored. Goodman et al. (1998) labeled leadership as a dimension for community capacity building. Edwards et al. (2000) also considered leadership to be an important dimension in

measuring community capacity building. In order to develop in the current economic, and social environment, communities need leaders who can help local groups, businesses, and non-profits work together to address challenges and promote local strengths (Wituk et al. 2003). Community capacity building is achieved through developing community leadership and decision-making skills in community members (Hardina 2002; Ife 2002). This is illustrated in the figure below.

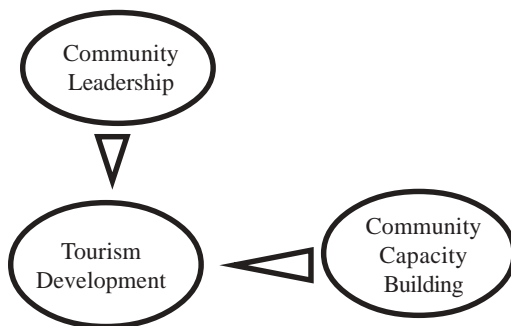


Fig. 1. Interaction between community leadership, community capacity building and tourism development

In a community capacity building approach, community leaders play a vital role in handling the programs and plans toward achieving the goals of the organization. In addition, a community without leadership may not be equipped to mobilize resources or influence tourism planning. Local community like other organization leaders cannot proceed successfully without having active and dynamic leaders willing and able to take initiatives. Therefore, the success of local organization mainly depends on the quality, creatively and commitment of its leadership in maintaining its daily affairs (Uphoff, et al 1998). Community leaders can help address local challenges with useful leadership skills and concepts while increasing social capital by bringing people together. Kirk and Kraft (2004) and Mills (2005) contend that fostering local leadership to help make communities better places to live be one of the primary purposes of community development. Finally, despite the need to understand community leadership, little is known about how to diffuse leadership throughout a community.

Community leadership is important for collaborative community based tourism development (Raik 2002; Raik, et al 2003).

Community leadership can take the form of formal leadership or informal leadership that contributes to initiating and sustaining action in a community. Community leaders are especially important in controversial or complex situations because they lend credibility to efforts to address public issues (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Lack of community leadership is often mentioned by local people as an obstacle to community development, particularly in declining local communities. The term “leadership” has become a code word for the social aspects of community development (Flora and Flora 1993). This study assumes that strong community leadership leads to community capacity building in tourism industry. Community leadership is one aspect of the tourism development strategies found in local communities.

STUDY AREA

Shiraz is an ancient city located on a green plain, at the foot of the Zagros Mountains. Its elevation is 1486 metres above sea level amidst the Zagros Mountains, and it is the capital of Fars Province. Shiraz has a moderate climate, with mild summers and winters. Its economic base is in its provincial products: it produces grapes, citrus fruits, cotton and rice. It is known as the city of poetry and roses. It is also the city of an outstanding cultural and artistic life, which makes it an interesting tourist destination so that is a city with a long and interesting history. Shiraz has been selected by UNESCO as the first Iranian city to be registered in the list of UNESCO’s city of literature (Cultural Heritage News Agency 2006). Shiraz has a lot of opportunities in developing various types of tourism activities. However it is alleged that Shiraz has not exploit enough its opportunities and tourist attractions in developing its tourism. Policy making on tourism development in Shiraz has been under the control of the government. Before the revolution, the government policy was development of tourism, especially for foreigners. However since the Islamic revolution (1979), the new government did not have a policy for development of tourism (Hafeznia et al. 2007). In recent decades, Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation has been formulating a policy on tourism development under the community development programs. In this policy, tourism is one of the priorities of community development programs (Cultural Heritage News

Agency 2006). In reality, some of the local communities in Shiraz city have had much experience in tourism development as they have used relatively new forms of tourism such as medical and cultural tourism.

For the purpose of the study Shiraz City is divided to two major areas – Area 1 is where we named it as historical Old Shiraz (historical) and Area 2 is New Shiraz (modern). Eighty six (86) communities are located in Old Shiraz, whereas 92 communities are located in New Shiraz. In the Old Shiraz, we could find many historical artefacts such as monuments, gates, and old buildings, whereas new and modern building such as shopping complexes and hotels are located in New Shiraz (Aref et al. 2009a, b).

METHODOLOGY

This study is an explanatory and descriptive study of community leadership for tourism development, and is based on quantitative research methodology to investigate the level of community leadership in community capacity building for tourism development. The study population consisted of 175 community leaders in the city of Shiraz. They were key leaders, where each community was represented by one key leader. Key leader is referred to the most important leader in the community, such as the headman. They were chosen for the study because they represent “the voice of the people of concern” (Eng and Parker 1994). Community leaders are able to speak for the community because they have special knowledge of the community being studied because of their roles in that community (Warheit et al. 1978; Von Kroff et al. 1992; Eyler et al. 1999; Thompson et al. 2000). While community residents may not be directly involved in tourism development, they are aware or affected by tourism development in the community. For this study community leader is defined as one who can influence policy, opinion, or community action because of their official role, title, or position in the community.

The study employed a structured questionnaire to measure community leadership. The structure questionnaire was the instrument in which the respondents themselves filled as part of participating in the study (Johnson and Christensen 2004). The questionnaire was structured around a ‘Likert scale’. The respondents answered each statement based on five

scales that most described the current situation in their community. The value of each response for these items on the questionnaire is as follows: 0= Never 1=Seldom 2= Sometimes 3= Often 4= Always. Ko and Stewart (2002) and Maddox (1985) recommended the use of a Likert type scale in tourism research due to its high validity. Then, questionnaire was pilot tested to evaluate the content and clarity by several reviewers who have Persian background. Indicators for community leadership were tested for their validity using Cronbach’s alpha. The participants in the pilot test had relatively diverse demographic characteristics, especially in regards to community. As suggested by Zikmund (2003) who argued the significance of pre-test in a question-naire survey, a pilot survey was conducted using a group of convenient samples during the 25th and 30th of June 2008. This was aimed at detecting problems in the questionnaire design. Thirty two questionnaires were distributed to 32 convenient samples comprising of research fellows, community leaders who lived in local community around the city. The collected data was entered into the SPSS for preliminary analysis. The results indicated the sufficiency and factorability of statements. It also showed satisfactory internal consistency of the manifest items measuring community leadership. To test the proposed objective, this study employed statistical techniques such as descriptive statistic and t-test. The t-test, was employed to test to determine whether there were significant differences among group mean totals, item mean scores (Jennings 2001). Means and standard deviations are the descriptive statistics used in discussing the distribution of responses gathered during the quantitative component of this study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

According to Table 1 only the Mean of leadership for “Actively involved in tourism development efforts” (M= 2.79) and “Encouraged and supported the involvement of tourism stakeholders” (M= 2.34) are higher. Findings show “Finding solutions for remove the barriers” (M=1.54) “Provide leadership opportunities for youth in tourism industry” (M= 0.97) “Create method to develop new leaders from the community” (M= 1.97) and “Communication and Reporting to local people” (1.91) are scored lowest in leadership development.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of community leadership indicators in tourism development

Leadership indicator	M	SD
1.Finding solutions to root barriers of tourism development	1.54	0.79
2.Actively involved in tourism development efforts	2.79	0.76
3.communication and Reporting to local people	1.91	0.73
4.Creating method to develop new leaders from the community	1.07	0.87
5.Provide leadership opportunities for youth in tourism industry	0.97	0.88
6.Encouraged and supported the involvement of tourism stakeholders	2.34	0.92

Figure 2 provides a distribution of high and low ratings of the six indicators of community leadership. Results showed that leadership opportunities for youth in tourism and creating method to develop new leaders were identified as being weak. This indicated local leaders have failure to provide community resources to develop new leaders. This also means that the community leader has failed to provide opportunities for youth to participate in tourism industry. The indicators of “Actively involved in tourism development” and “encouragement and support of the involvement of formal leaders” were the strong points of community leadership in tourism development.

The Figure 2 indicated that overall community leadership as a dimension of community capacity building is weak and that there is a need for the community to prioritize which domains they want to begin to strengthen. The findings of this study imply that community leadership might be a factor for underdevelopment of tourism industry in Shiraz. It is expected that the findings of this study could be utilized by the community leaders for a future follow-up and reassessments of community leadership for tourism development in their communities.



Fig. 2. Indicators of community leadership

Overall community leadership in this case cannot be a factor for enhancing community capacity building in tourism development. Figure 3 illustrates level of community leadership in comparison with other dimensions of community capacity building. The figure reveals that in comparison with the other is lowest.

In this study we also attempt to make a comparison between the means of each domain in relation to the different locations of communities, Old Shiraz and New Shiraz. The findings are shown in Table 2.

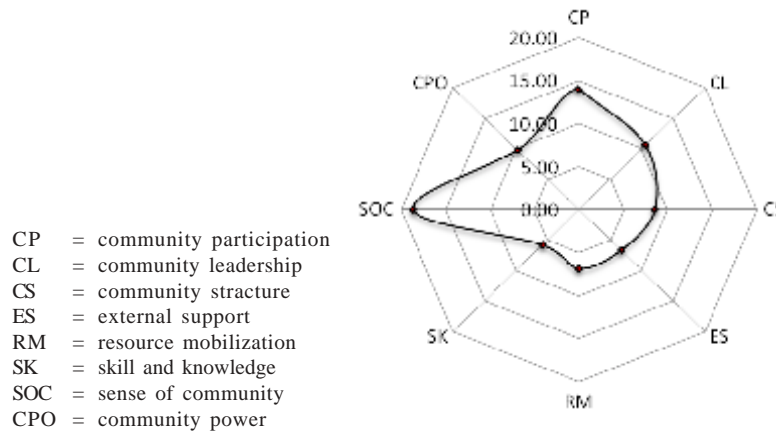
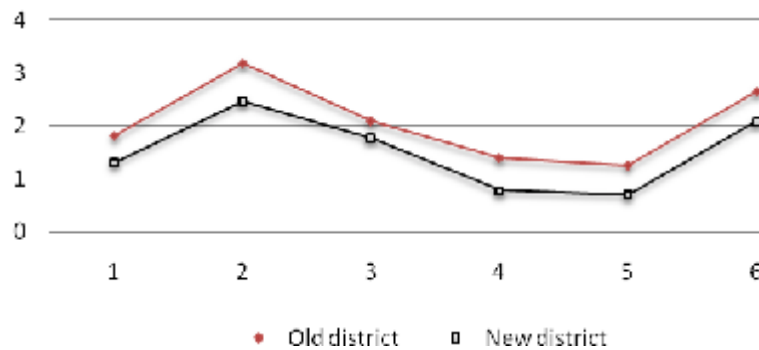


Fig. 3. Spider web configuration of community capacity building

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of community leadership indicators in tourism development in old and new districts of Shiraz

Leadership indicators	Old district		New district	
	M	SD	M	SD
1.Finding solutions to root barriers of tourism development	1.8	0.9	1.3	0.57
2.Actively involved in tourism development efforts	3.17	0.74	2.45	0.6
3.Communication and Reporting to local people	2.08	0.71	1.76	0.71
4.Create method to develop new leaders	1.39	0.9	0.77	0.72
5.Provide leadership opportunities for youth	1.26	0.85	0.7	0.83
6.Encouraged the involvement of tourism stakeholders	2.64	0.9	2.07	0.85

**Fig. 4. level of community leadership in old and new district of Shiraz**

Findings in Table 2 and Figure 4 show that the mean of level of community leadership in the Old district of Shiraz is higher than in the new district. These findings imply that the leaders in the Old Shiraz communities have made better efforts in building their community leadership in relations to tourism development compared to those leaders in the New Shiraz communities.

Hence we attempted to prove whether the differences are significant. We use t-test statistical analysis to establish whether there is a difference. The result of the test is shown in Table 3.

According to the table above Old districts ($M=12.35, SD=3.61$) reported significantly higher level of community leadership than New district ($M=8.99, SD=3.01$) at level .000, $t=6.69, p=.000$. Thus it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the level of community leadership in local communities in New Shiraz and Old Shiraz ($P<0.05$).

CONCLUSION

The importance of community leadership development in building strong communities cannot be debated. Community leadership is an important strategy enabling communities to respond to improve tourism development. We used six indicators for measuring of community leadership in the process of community capacity building for tourism development. Based on the literature review we assumed community leadership will contribute to community capacity building but the results show that level of community leadership in tourism development has been low. The finding of this study shows weaknesses community leadership in tourism development in terms of leadership indicators. Hence, community leadership in tourism development in Shiraz cannot become a reality unless specific and deliberate strategies are developed to tackle the outlined barriers.

Table 3: The t-test comparisons of districts of Shiraz according to the level of community leadership

	Districts	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig
Level of community leadership	Old	84	12.35	3.61	6.69	173	.000
	New	91	8.99	3.01			

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