

Sustainability of Small Tourism Enterprises: A Comparison of Homestays and Independent Businesses from Ghalegaon and Ghandruk of the Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal

Authors : Baikuntha Prasad Acharya, Elizabeth Halpenny

Abstract : Small tourism enterprises (STEs) are primary providers of services and attractions in many destinations of less developed countries; they are considered the lifeblood of tourism sector. Furthermore, in rural community destinations of such countries including Nepal, STEs are regarded as alternative tools for advancing economic and sociocultural transformations. Many families in rural Nepali destinations are venturing into small tourism entrepreneurship so that their poverty can be reduced and they can live a sustained life. Most these communities are utilizing their lifestyles and natural and cultural heritages as tourism attractions. This study aimed to understand the sustainability of the STEs in rural destinations by synthesizing observations from Ghalegaon and Ghandruk of the Annapurna Conservation Area in western Nepal. Ghalegaon has community-based homestays and Ghandruk has independently owned and operated small tourism businesses such as cafes, tea houses, lodges, guest houses, and hotels, etc. The community-based homestays of Ghalegaon are compared with the independently owned and operated STEs of Ghandruk. The data were collected through multiple sources: 1) survey of tourists (n=112) and households (n=191); 2) interviews (n=14) with the locals, 3) group discussions (n=10) with different local groups including that of regional tourism players, experts and policy makers, 4) observations, and 5) document analysis. The STEs of both communities were first analyzed by understanding their level of sustainability as businesses, and then were explored how they were impacting on respective communities' sustainability. The survey indicators and guidelines for interviews and group discussions were adapted to the Nepalese context based on four pillars of sustainability: economic, social, cultural and environmental; an additional dimension of management was also included, particularly for the STEs. The findings have shown a weaker economic and management dimensions of Ghalegaon's Homestay than that of Ghandruk's STEs. Some interesting social complexities of rural tourism and entrepreneurship were also revealed. This study's findings do not much resonate to what Nepal government's current rural tourism strategies that have been envisioned and prioritized for, particularly that the rural homestay tourism opportunities enhance inclusiveness of women and other deprived communities by spreading the benefits to the grassroots level. The study has highlighted several important applied implications to the local tourism management committees, tourism operators and associations, and regional and national tourism authorities. Further studies are advisable in other similar contexts in Nepal and in other countries to see whether there are variances in the findings.

Keywords : Nepal, rural tourism communities, small tourism enterprises, sustainability

Conference Title : ICHTMM 2017 : International Conference on Hospitality, Tourism Marketing and Management

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : May 25-26, 2017