

Community Based Tourism Development Amid Complex Mountain Issues: A Strategic Analysis of Chakrata Region of Uttarakhand

S.K. Gupta*, Prakash Chandra Rout**, Pankaj Tyagi***

Abstract *The hope of livelihood enhancement for the mountain dwellers has been a climacteric and novel effort by many international and national organizations lately. Community based tourism development in these rural hinterlands is one of those efforts by many organizations and agencies. However, these developmental initiatives in the name of tourism remain in black and white. The very work through this piece of research has highlighted the ongoing developmental discourse of tourism in Chakrata region of Uttarakhand in India. Issues pertaining to infrastructure, policy, and community preparedness are top in the fray. The research has synthesized the core constraints and challenges the Himalayan region has been confronting. In the same time the results have provided some feasible strategies to make tourism development ideal in the region.*

Keywords: *Community Based Tourism, Community Development, Tourism Development, Community Issues, Tourism Policy*

INTRODUCTION

The global significance of mountains is increasingly recognized with the inclusion of a specific chapter in 'Agenda 21' and the declaration of the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (NORDREGIO), 2004). The individual safety and welfare of one sixth of the world's human population, and water supply of almost half of all people are directly or indirectly reliant on the functional integrity of mountain ecosystems. The two key components which make mountains so important and sensitive are (1) altitude and (2) slope (Korner, 2003). Mountain areas cover 24% of the planet earth's land surface (UNEP-WCMC, 2002) and are dwelling to 12% of the global human population (Huddleston & Ataman, 2003), with a further 14% living in their immediate vicinity (Mebeck, et. Al. 2001). All major

rivers of the world have originated in mountains and more than half of the world's mountain areas play a vital role in bringing water to downstream regions (Viviroli et al., 2007). Mountain regions are repositories of biological and cultural diversity and provide vital services with a tangible economic value-include water, power, minerals, medicinal plants, and fibers-to mountain communities and, even having greater significance to often heavily populated downstream areas. Mountains also impact the climates of their surrounding regions and serve as vital carbon sinks (ICIMOD, 2010). Mountains can be found on every continent include remarkable ranges such as the Himalayas, the Andes, the Alps and the Rockies, and less well-known highlands such as the Elburz Mountains in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Cairngorms in Scotland and the Fouta Djallon Highlands in West Africa. They are characterized by immense global diversity – from tropical rain forests to permanent ice and snow, from climates with more than 12 m of annual rainfall

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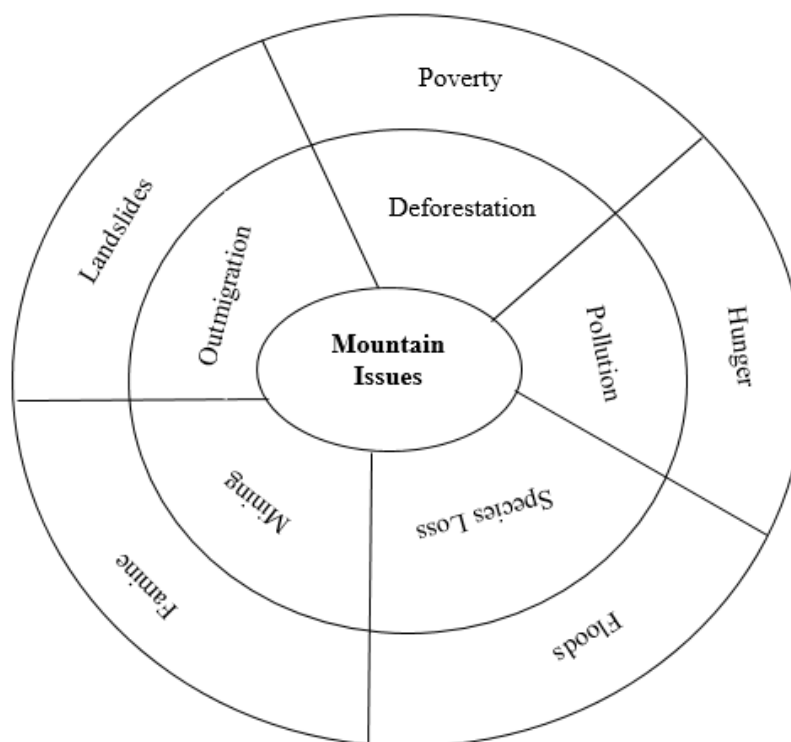
to high-altitude deserts, and from sea level to almost 9000 m in altitude (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2011).

Spreading far beyond national borders in many areas, mountain systems have become the object of international treaties and trans-boundary collaboration initiatives; like the Andean Community, the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention. Nevertheless, despite mountains' strategic importance, many mainstream national and international development efforts have deserted mountains, which are often perceived as remote, inaccessible areas that are "hard to reach". A combination of government neglect, insufficient private investment and environmental fragility has worsened the socio-economic situation of many mountain people (Ariza, et al., 2013). Development of mountain areas is often designed by decisions taken in political and economic hubs in lowland areas. The welfares behind these decisions are short-term rather than long-term, and extraction of resources takes precedence over the sustainable development of mountain areas. To give a cessation to political and economic marginalization, mountain areas need to be recognized as equivalent partners in development. Strategies to reach this goal include decentralisation, local institution building, recognition of

local civil rights to natural resources, and establishment of platforms and joint networks to give mountain populations a "voice" (Mountain Agenda, 2002).

KEY MOUNTAIN ISSUES

Though mountains signify irreplaceable centres of biological and cultural diversity, people living in mountain regions are mostly affected by poverty and hunger, and mountain ecosystems are highly exposed to environmental risks and degradation. Until lately, however, law-makers have not taken meaningful interest in the protection and development of mountains (Villeneuve, et al., 2002). The 'water tower of the world' 'confronting a growing number of problems including floods, landslides, famine, pollution, climate change, armed conflicts, population growth, deforestation, exploitative agriculture, mining and tourism practices (Price et al., 2004). The most widely reported impact in the 'greater Himalayan region', sometimes called the 'Roof of the World', is the rapid reduction in glaciers, which has profound impacts on downstream water resources. The impacts of climate change are overlaid on a variety of other environmental and social stresses, many already recognised as severe (Ives & Messerli, 1989).



Source: authors

Fig. 1: Mountain Issues

As accessibility to mountain areas and mountain population have increased, mountain capitals and its dwellers have moved downhill while environmental degradation and social ills have climbed uphill. Landslides, land degradation, desertification, deforestation and glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) are key environmental issues in mountain regions, which are particularly vulnerable to natural hazards. Atmospheric variations are now a key challenge for those concerned with mountain environments: evolving issues are climate change and emissions of aerosols and acidifying substances. These processes result from emissions from the industrial, transport, and domestic sectors (Iyengararasan, et al., 2004).

While the global mountain and its people are facing the aforementioned issues, the Chakrata region of the state Uttarakhand, India has no exception from it. The region is still struggling with the issues of economic and social reformation. Under this circumstances the Himalayan region has a plethora of natural, cultural and social assets to act as a lifesaver. These assets can be strategically used by the mountain community in 'Community Based Tourism Promotion' where the local members will own and run the community based tourism enterprises for their overall wellbeing.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The global mountain area defined is almost 40 million square kilometers, or 27% of Earth's surface. Assuming a lower mountain boundary of 1,000 meters at the equator and a linear reduction of this boundary to 300 meters at 67°N and 55°S reduced the total "mountain" land area by 5.4 million square kilometers or 3.7 % of the global land (Spehn, et al., 2005). Major part of the Earth's terrestrial surface is roofed by mountains, which host a larger proportion of the Earth's biodiversity than would be expected by area (Korner, 2004, Mutke & Barthlott, 2005). Mountain dwellers is particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Slopes with steep and differing elevations often make the soil shallow, poor in micronutrients, limited and difficult to cultivate and unsuitable for mass agricultural production. Distance from roads, poor infrastructure and marginalization render access to markets more difficult. Further, the occurrence and magnitude of extreme climatic events are traditionally higher in mountains than in lowlands, a situation that is increasing due to climate change (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2015).

The concept of CBT can be traced back and linked with alternative development approaches formulated during the 1970s which were concerned with issues beyond strict economic reasoning, such as empowerment and self-reliance (Telfer, 2009). Community development contains associations of groups of persons who combined their actions not individually (Flora et al., 1992). The life style

of the communities in many ways enormously influenced by tourism development like augmenting rates of crime; increased the living cost, generation of water waste, and congestion of traffic (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009). CBT considered to be an effective way of implementing policy coordination, avoid conflicts between different stakeholders in tourism, and obtaining synergies grounded on the exchange of knowledge, analysis and ability among all members of the community (Kibicho, 2008).

TOURISM IN THE CHAKRATA REGION

Chakrata, part of "Jaunsar-Bawar" region, is located in Dehradun district of the state Uttarakhand in Garhwal Himalayas between 30° 31' to 31° 3' N latitudes and 77° 42' to 78° 5' E longitudes, covering an area of approximately 1,999.50 km² in India. Physiographically the highly mountainous region is situated between the upper courses of river Yamuna and Tons. The climate of Chakrata varies from sub-tropical to temperate (Cheema et al., 2014).

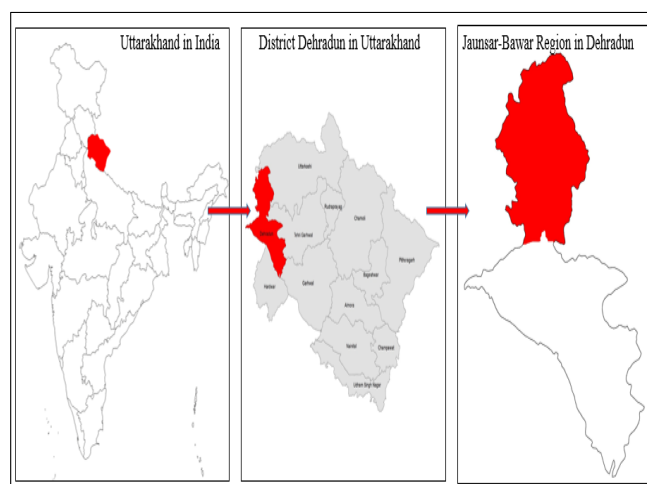
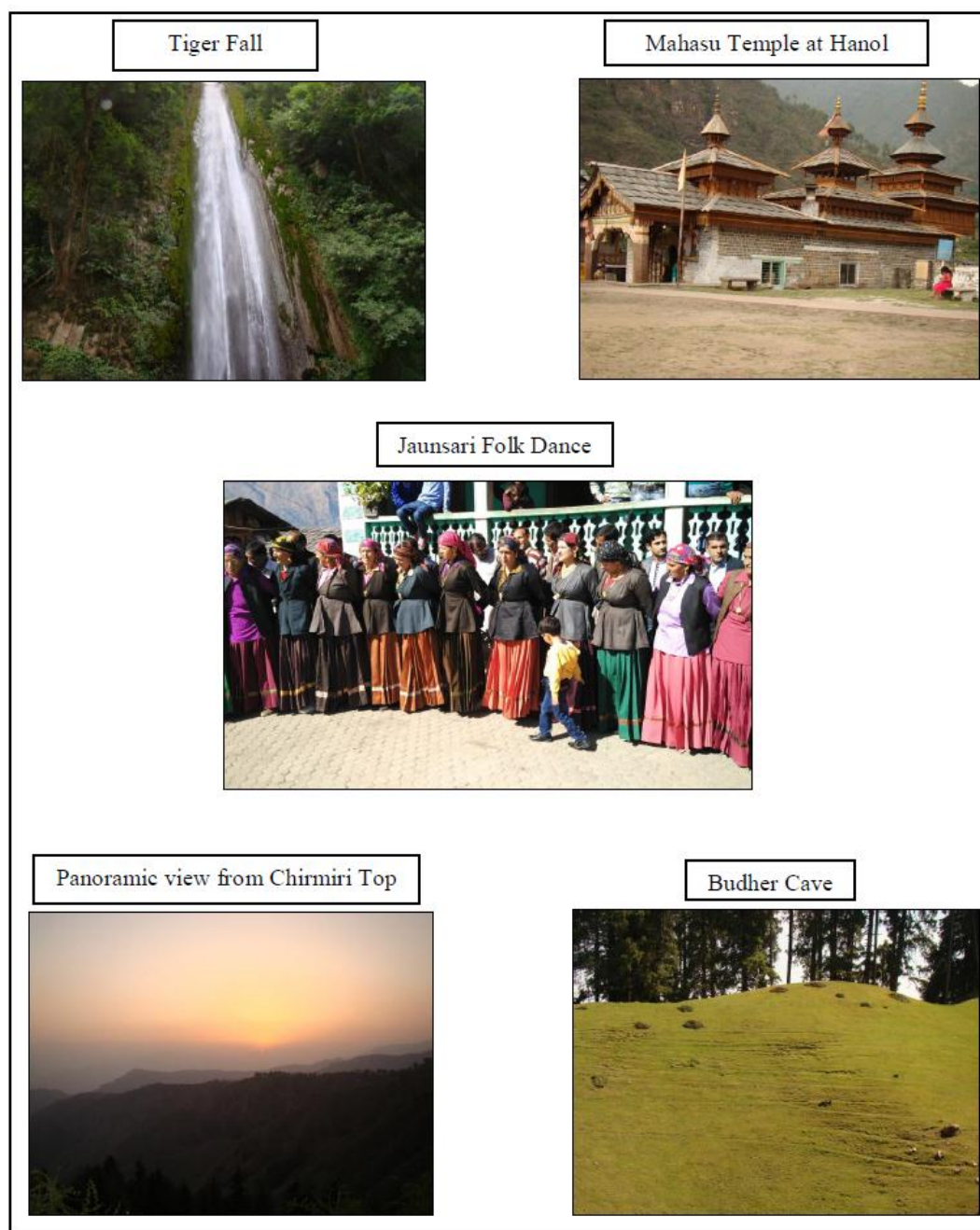


Fig. 2: Map of Chakrata

The Himalayan region of Chakrata has a great potential to enthrall globetrotters. The tourism resources in this aboriginal land are yet to be explored by many.

The destination holds a variety of resources in its lap to cater all segments of tourists. Tourism development is still in its nascent stage due to poor market linkages. The recent State Government initiative to identify tourism potential villages in the region has created a hope for tourism development in the region. The destination suffers from poverty, education, hunger, migration and lack of inward investment opportunities. At this juncture community based tourism promotion in this aboriginal Himalayan land seems to be an ideal strategy to strengthen the local economy at large. Community based tourism promotion in this region can provide value to the local natural and socio-cultural resources, in the same time.



Photos: courtesy S.K. Gupta & Prakash Chandra Rout

Fig. 3: Tourism Resources of Chakrata

OBJECTIVES

The study has undertaken with the following objectives:

- To highlight the issues which are continuously obstructing the development of mountain areas?
- To understand the importance of mountains for human survival.
- To understand the community preparedness towards community based tourism development in the region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the survey response of community members towards the preparedness to support community based tourism in the region. The study is descriptive in nature and the respondents were selected through random sampling techniques. The data were collected using structured questionnaires to seek information on the socio-demographic profile of the community members and questions pertaining to community preparedness to take

part in CBT. Three hundred and fifty questionnaires were filled in the month of May, June and October of the year 2015 and January, February, April and June of 2016 from the community members of the region. Three point ordinal scale was used for purpose of the study. Statistical Packages for Social Science Research (SPSS) Version-20 was used for the purpose of analyzing the data. Statistical analysis frequencies are used for the analysis and interpretation the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socio Demographic Characteristics of the Community Members

In Table 1, the socio demographic characteristics of the sample respondents from the 18 different villages are divided in gender, age, education, occupation and monthly income. In terms of gender out of 350 samples 228 (65.1%) were males and 122 (34.9%) respondents were female. The age distribution of the sample respondents was from 18 -60 years. Out of which 89 (25.4%) respondents were in the age group of 30-40 years, 87 (24.9%) were in the age group of 40-50, 68 (19.4%) were in the age between 20-30, 55 (15.7%) were between the age 50-60 and 51 (14.6%) were in the age group of <20 respectively. As the mountain communities are far away from the mainstream development, therefore sound educational services are yet to reach there. The study found the clear disparity in the education qualification having a higher illiteracy rate among the respondents 135 respondents (38.6%) and 127 (36.3%) respondents were just able to reach up to the high school. On the other side, only 54 (15.4%), 17 (4.9%), 17 (4.9%) of samples participated in the research were able to receive Intermediate, Graduate and Postgraduate education from within and outside of Jaunsar-Bawar region. As evident in the mountainous region, the major occupation of the respondents was farming. Out of the total respondents 156 (44.6%) were farmers, followed by 39 (11.1%) businessmen, 34 (9.7%) livestock keeper, 17 (4.9%) service men (both government or private) respectively. However, 36 (10.3%) respondents were unemployed. It put more emphasis on the development of Community Based Tourism Development to generate employment.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	228	65.1
Female	122	34.9

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Up to 20 years	51	14.6
Up to 30 years	68	19.4
Up to 40 years	89	25.4
Up to 50 years	87	24.9
Up to 60 years	55	15.7
Education		
Up to High school	127	36.3
Intermediate	54	15.4
Graduate	17	4.9
Post Graduate	17	4.9
Illiterate	135	38.6
Occupation		
Farmer	156	44.6
Livestock keeper	34	9.7
Business Man	39	11.1
Day Labor	51	14.6
Service-Govt. or Pvt.	17	4.9
Unemployed	36	10.3
Other	17	4.9
Monthly Income		
<15000	267	76.3
15,000-30,000	66	18.9
30,000-40,000	9	2.6
> 40, 000	8	2.3

Source: Primary Data

On the basis of occupation 267 (76.3%) respondents are earning less than Rs. 15000/- per month, 66 (18.9%) of the respondents are earning an average income between Rs.15000-3000 per month, 9 (2.6%) of the community respondents are in the bit higher income group between Rs. 30000-40000 monthly and only 8 (2.3%) respondents of the sample population are able to earn a higher income of more than Rs.40,000/-.

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS TOWARDS COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM

In order to promote community based tourism in the rural hinterland it was worth appropriate to understand the community preparedness towards it.

Table 2: Community Preparedness towards the promotion of CBT

Dependent Variables	Mean	SD	Agree	Ignorant	Disagree
I am optimistic that CBT has bright future	1.5714	.71759	197 56.3%	106 30.3%	47 13.4%
I am willing to support the development of CBT in Chakrata	1.5457	.72761	208 59.4%	93 26.6%	49 14.0%
I am willing to protect local natural, cultural resources and environment in the process of development of CBT	1.5657	.73782	204 58.3%	94 26.9%	52 14.9%
I am willing to participate in making the policies and decisions for CBT	1.4971	.72905	225 64.3%	76 21.7%	49 14.0%
I am willing to participate in CBT development and planning	1.5486	.75450	214 61.6%	80 22.9%	56 16.0%
I am willing to work in collaboration with other stakeholders	1.6343	.80327	200 57.1%	78 22.3%	72 20.6%
I am willing to engage in independent CBT projects (e.g. running family hotel, restaurants, commodity, transportation)	1.5886	.85437	229 65.4%	36 10.3%	85 24.3%
I am willing to work in community based ecotourism enterprises (e.g. green hotels, green travel agencies, ecological scenic spots)	1.5171	.71696	215 61.4%	89 25.4%	46 13.1%
I am willing to accept community based tourism education and training	1.4686	.70030	228 65.1%	80 22.9%	42 12.0%

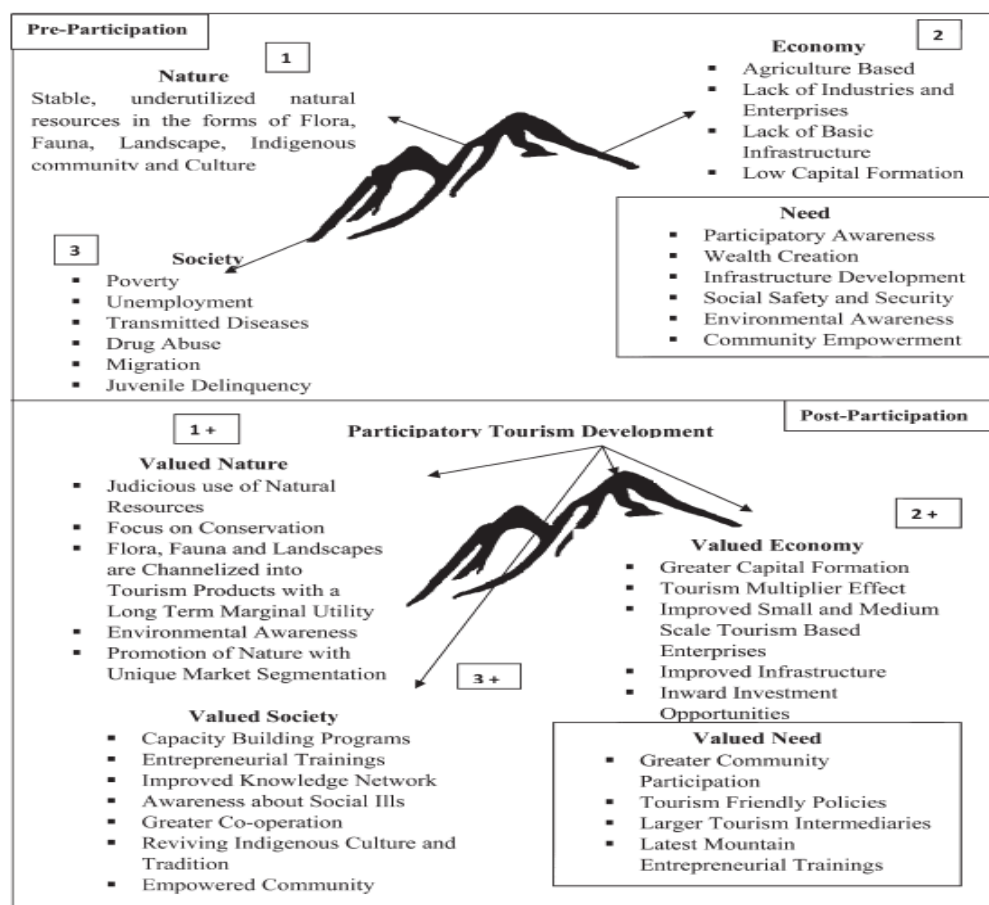
Source: Primary Data

The nine dependent variables that were taken to understand the community preparedness to willingly participate in the promotion of CBT show a positively significant result. In order to understand the existence of CBT for a longer period 197 (56.3%) respondents were agreed, 47 (13.4%) were disagreed and 106 (30.3%) respondents were ignorant with a mean and standard deviation of 1.5714 and .71759. 208 (59.4%) respondents were agreed to willingly to support the development of CBT in Chakrata, 93 (26.6%) were disagreed to support CBT in the region and 93 (26.6%) respondents were ignorant. In order to understand how local resources (natural, cultural and environmental) can be well protected, 204 (58.3%) respondents were agreed to willing to protect the environment, 52 (14.9%) respondents were disagreed to protect the environment and 94 (26.9%) respondents were ignorant with a mean of 1.5657 and standard deviation of .73782. The dependent variables related to the community willingness to take part in policy and decision making had also shown a positive response with 225 (64.3%) were agreed, 49 (14%) were disagreed and 76 (21.7%) respondents were ignorant. In order to understand the community willingness to participate in CBT development and planning 214 (61.6%) respondents were agreed, 56 (16%) respondents were disagreed and 80 (22.9%) were ignorant with mean and standard deviation of 1.5486 and .75450. Community willingness to work in collaboration with other stake holders has also shown a positive response with 200 (57.1%) agreed, 72 (20.6%) disagreed and 78 (22.3%) respondents were ignorant towards it. Two hundred twenty-nine (229, (65.4%)) respondents were agreed to engage in independent CBT projects and to answer the same question 85 (24.3%)

were disagreed and 36 (10.3%) respondents were ignorant. Question pertaining to community willingness to work in community based ecotourism enterprises, a higher number of 215 (61.4%) respondents were agreed, 46 (13.1%) were disagreed and 89 (25.4%) respondents were ignorant. To answer the last question of dependent variables on community willingness to accept tourism education and training 228 (65.1%) respondents were agreed, 42 (12.0%) were disagreed and 80 (22.9%) of the respondents were ignorant with a mean of 1.4686 and standard deviation of .70030. The table reveals that majority of the respondents were optimistic and willing to support community based tourism in the region (mean value ranging between 1.46 and 1.63).

THE VALUE TOURISM CAN ADD TO THE COMMUNITY

Tourism has a great potential to add value to the community. According to Gupta & Rout (2016) community participation can mobilize community's natural, cultural and social assets to further by adding a value to it. According to their *Pre-and Post-Tourism Participatory Model* the active participation of community in the centre give a new life to its above mentioned three assets, where the community are in the urge of awareness, wealth creation, infrastructure development, community safety and security and empowerment. The participatory model has further delivered that community participation make a paradigm shift in the post participation. The post participation results show a greater value in all three spheres e.g. nature, culture and society.



Source: adopted from Gupta & Rout (2016).

Fig. 4: Pre-and Post-Tourism Participatory Model

A SUCCESS STORY

The Case of 'Road less Travel Venture'

The Road Less Travel venture, a Community Based Ecotourism initiative on the foot of Trans-Himalaya laid its foundation stone in the year 2012 in the Korwa village of Chakrata *tehsil* in the district Dehradun of the state Uttarakhand in India. The IIM alumni of the region took pain to lead from the front. Though the initiative was a trade-off between a lucrative career and the economic wellbeing of the region but they choose the later one and the entrepreneurial venture is a grand success. The alumni started this entrepreneurial venture in the name '*The Blue Canvas Resort*' in the outskirts of the Chakrata cantonment. Now the travel venture deals with a wide range of travel activities start with pick from the station to drop at the door-step. The resort has 15 lettable tents with other on premises facilities like game room, restaurant-cum-coffee shop and a souvenir shop etc. for tourists. The neoliberal approach that blends both modern management and traditional technological approach is very much in appliance within the resort. Most of the furniture's of the resort are self-made; grains, pulses, vegetables used in the resort are locally produced. Even the staffs working in the resort are from the local vicinity and the handicraft items sold in the souvenir shop are locally made. The folk cultural shows that performed before the guest are by the local crews. It is evident that community based tourism promotion along with a strong local participation is a long association of an endless journey to showcase a participatory success story of a Himalayan mountain. The venture deals with various adventure activities like camping, trekking, rappelling, caving, nature trails etc. in destinations around the local vicinity like Chakrata, Deoban, Mundali, Budher, Kanasar, Chirmiri top and Tiger fall. The allocentric travelers those who want to explore the unexplored region of Jaunsar-Bawar can have a glance to the travel portal of the Road Less Travel Venture for a better travel treat in the region. The participatory approach has a positive impact on the local economy. The entrepreneurial success is currently benefiting the mountainous region through job creation, cultural promotion, corporate social responsibility activities and proper waste disposal system by its all endeavor. The attempt of the entrepreneurial venture in promoting the local art and craft, culture and strengthen the local economy in a micro scale is worth appreciable.

CONCLUSION

The above discourse based on the socio-economic development of mountain communities through tourism as a mainstream agenda has brought some significant highlights. The thematic approach of community based tourism development in the region certainly may mitigate the long-standing issues related to economic, socio-cultural and environment in many ways. Lately the State Government has also identified tourism potential villages in the region, however not much developmental initiative had taken to promote tourism full-fledged in the region. In order to venturing into CBT the state government support through various tourism related community centric policies are the key for its success. In the same time government's intervention through various long and medium term projects to create awareness and empowerment of various stakeholders of CBT is also utmost important. The case study of the 'Road less Travel Venture' is a perfect example of a successful community based tourism enterprises in the region. It is hoped that tourism policy makers, government, researchers and tourism agencies can collaboratively work with result based management (RBM) approach to mobilize the local assets to create successful CBT development models in the region. The outcome of successful CBT will certainly contribute to the welfare of these deprived communities of Himalaya.

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