

# Local Community Participation in Destination Image Rebuilding During Crisis

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## Abstract

Crises, generally recognised as specific “non-routine events in societies or their larger subsystem (e.g., regions or communities) that involve social disruption and physical harm” (Kreps, 1988). An escalating and unpredictable terrorist attacks, political insurgency, natural disasters, and health pandemics that prevailed in the world, are affecting the globalised tourism industry. The consequence of a crisis is that even one unfortunate incident can destroy the good image of a destination that had built from years (Mathes, Gärtner & Czaplicki, 1991). The main aim of the present study is to ascertain the role of the local community in destination image rebuilding during the crisis. The mixed methodology was applied in this study. The semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect primary data while secondary data was collected using online sources like UGC-Inflibnet, Ebsco host and Google Scholar. The study emphasised that community participation have a significant role in tourism development in crisis. The main finding of this study reveals that local communities play a pivotal role in image rebuilding for the crisis hit destination and a model is proposed for the same.

**Keywords:** Crisis, Community Participation, Destination Image, Rebuilding Image

## Introduction

The Travel and Tourism industry is the vast industry spread throughout the globe, and is made up of tourism business organizations that provide services in order to meet the distinctive needs and wants of the tourists. It is the world’s prevalent and fastest developing industry. According to WTTC annual Report 2018, the Travel and Tourism have contributed 3.2% to direct global GDP growth and has supported 118,454,000 jobs (3.8% of

total employment) in 2017. Despite such a prospectus, the industry faces specific hindrance and obstacles across the globe. The reasons being political instability, escalating and volatile terrorist attacks and natural disasters. Every industry across the globe is vulnerable to disasters and crisis, and tourist industry is not an exception to it, the tourism industry is extremely susceptible to both natural disasters as well as to human-caused disasters, natural disasters include torrential rain, hurricanes, devastating floods, destructive earthquake, and volcanic eruptions while human-caused disasters include political insurgency, terrorism, socio-political riots, social crime, war, political upheaval, regional tensions. In spite of the type of disaster that occurs at the destination, it produces horrifying impact for the people living at the destination. After the disaster happens at a place or during the time of disaster, the media play a definite role in portraying the image of the destination.

People across the globe came to know about the devastation caused by disaster through the media coverage. Media report the resultant loss caused by the disaster whether human or property, public or private, social or economic and airs this new to the mass audience. This coverage of issues that are most of the times negatively hyped by media acts as negative publicity stunt towards the destination. This period that includes the phase during and after disaster for the tourist destination, unless its image is recovered to the original position, represent a tourism crisis for the destination. It threatens the normal operation of tourism-related businesses. It often damages a tourist destination’s overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort. This results in affecting visitor’s perceptions negatively towards that destination; and, in turn, causes a downturn in the local travel and tourism economy.

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Moreover, interrupt the continuity of business operations for local travel and tourism industry, by the decline in tourist arrivals and expenditures (Sönmez, Backman, & Allen 1994).

However, the potential threat that accompanies political instability causes a severe reaction, affecting the future of tourism at the destination. In most cases, they tend to damage a destination's image and to compromise perceptions regarding its overall safety and security and shape the tourists' perceptions of the place in a very negative way. This negative perception in the minds of tourists has very distressful effect for the destinations. It results in plummet in tourist arrivals towards the destination, which in turn ruins the economy at the effected destination

As earlier discussed tourism, as an industry is highly vulnerable to both internal and external shocks and events as varied from economic slumps, epidemic disease, natural disasters, and international conflicts. Tourism Industry has faced various setbacks throughout the globe over the past, like the instability of European continent; the civil wars like Yugoslavia; Arab uprising, Persian Gulf War; Financial and sociopolitical turmoil in Asia, Europe and America.

Disaster whether natural or human-caused hampers the tourist flow across the globe. It tends to terrorise the public and tourists to travel to a destination, hence results in cancellation of vacations and trips. Tourism considers as the activity of pleasure for the tourist, but this very nature of tourism is affected at the time of disaster. Tourists feel risk while visiting a destination that is disaster hit, and they often avoid visiting these destinations. It has been witnessed during the time of political stability in 1980's and at the time of Gulf war in 1990's, tourist have visited alternate safe destinations and even have cancelled traveling altogether. Recent incidents like 9/11 in the USA, Egypt crisis, Arab uprising, terrorist attacks in Europe, and political instability in Thailand. has drastically affected the tourism industry across the globe. India too as a tourist destination has suffered economically because of the crisis. The incidents like Taj Hotel attack in Mumbai, the insurgency in Assam and Kashmir has tarnished the image of India tourism industry. If we talk of Kashmir valley, popularly known, as "Paradise on Earth" has also been a victim of the political crisis. There had always been ups and down in the tourist arrivals to the J&K.

The Valley of Kashmir has gained massive impetus as the preferred tourist place during the 1970's and 1980's. As in 1988, a record number of over 7,22,000 tourists had visited the Valley. However, the flow of tourists was affected in 1990's as a result of insurgency, and during the year 1993, only 6600 tourists have visiting the valley of Kashmir. This downfall in tourist arrivals has intensely impact the Kashmir tourism industry.

The incident of terrorism has restricted the flow of tourists towards the destination until the time people forgets about the event. However if the act of terrorism continue it will tarnish the image of that destination and will form the negative perception in the minds of tourists. The destination like Egypt, Peru, Thailand, Israel and other places are the example which show how political insurgency effect the behavior of tourist in negative way. After the disaster or crisis, destination not only has to manage the crisis for its own people, but also has responsibility of tourist in term of their safety and security.

Scholar all across the globe has complete accord that security incidents and terrorist attacks has an impact on the economy of local community (Mansfield & Pizam, 2006). These events also leave a mark on the perception of tourists towards the particular destination has hamper there traveling decisions. (Seddighi et al., 2000; Sakr & Massoud, 2003; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Mansfield & Pizam, 2006). It is challenging to stop a crisis from happening especially natural disaster, but there are always ways to manage a crisis or mitigate its negative impacts. There should be proper crisis management strategies to tackle the crisis and rebuild the image of the destination. The tourism stakeholders like Government, Travel Agents, Hoteliers, NGO's, Media at a destination has a vital role to play in recovering the image of the destination. Besides the earlier mentioned tourism stakeholder, Local Community too can play a significant role during the crisis. The main aim of the paper is to ascertain the role of the local community in destination image rebuilding during the crisis.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Crisis and Crisis Management**

Crises are the unusual events and incidents that have a long term repercussions for the destinations and the

people living there. Different authors have defined crisis in different ways, and have presented different ways to address this issues. However, mitigating crisis is not an easy task, it has various issues associated with it. One of the major issues is the unanimous definition of crisis. This anonymity is as result of various synonymous terms used with crisis such as negative event, risk, chaos, problem and catastrophe. All these terms are related with vulnerability and are interchangeable with crisis (Pizam, 1999; Faulkner, 2001; Glaesser, 2003; Prideaux et al, 2003; Pforr & Hosie, 2008). Santana (2004) urged that there no well defined definition of crisis.

Pauchant & Douville (1993) and Glaesser (2006) have drawn the origin of word crisis from Greek, and it means 'differentiation' otherwise 'decision'. Darling (1994) describes a crisis as a "turning point for better or worse", a "decisive moment", or a "crucial time" while Smith & Elliot (2006) define crisis as the situation very complicated and cannot be handled with ease. Pearson & Mitroff (1993) define a crisis as "an incident that poses a threat to the reputation of organisations and also to its viability". Crises are the events that are generally unexpected in nature, causes damage at a large and happens with short period of a time (Mitroff et al. 1996).

As per Pforr (2006) there are two approaches to definition of crisis i.e. generalised and precise.

Those who opt to offer somewhat vague definitions are said to take generalized approach like Ritchie et al (2004) and Prideaux (2004). While those who tend to make a distinction between a crisis and a disaster like Faulkner (2001), are example of precise definition. According to McKercher & Hui (2003) disasters are either natural events (floods, Tsunami, earthquakes and typhoons) or as human-induced events (terrorism and war). Coles (2000) argued that crisis have an adverse impact on the local tourism sector. Santana (2004), however, argues that a "crisis is not an event. It is a process that develops in its logic".

Another approach - and perhaps the most common one - is the classification of crises according to their causes. (El-Khudery, 2003) said there are two causes of crisis i.e. naturally occurring crisis and human-made crisis. The most common alternative general classification recognises three main categories: natural disasters, organisational crises and political upheavals. Natural crises include

earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions, while the second category comprises unintended consequences of human activities, such as industrial explosions and pollution, and the third covers deliberate acts such as political activities and terrorism (Lynch, 2004).

In general, the crisis can be recognised as specific "non-routine events in societies or their larger subsystem (e.g., regions or communities) that involve social disruption and physical harm" (Kreps, 1988). In simple meaning, Crises tend to refer to an event that leads to adverse business outcomes, which are in part exacerbated by lack of preparation or planning action by managers (Faulkner, 2001). Proper planning and management practices can help in mitigating the adverse effects of the crisis on tourism destination.

Rosenthal & Pijnenburg (1991) Crisis management "involves efforts to prevent crises from occurring; to prepare for better protection against the impact of a crisis agent; to make for an effective response to an actual crisis; to provide plans and resources for recovery and rehabilitation in the aftermath of a crisis". Glaesser (2006) describes crisis management as the process and strategy to cope up with crisis. These are the preventive measures planned against the crisis.

## Community Participation in Tourism

Initially, the concept of participation was used in political science and they speak about rights of individuals and their civic duty to its country (Tosun, 2005). However, the participation is not only confined to political right such as right to vote at the time of elections but it has various parameters associated with it when it comes to development (Midgley, 1986). The idea of participation is extensively used in various fields, which includes tourism as well. In the field of tourism participation includes participation of locals, tourist, government etc for the overall development of the destination. Tosun (2000) defines community participation in the development of tourism as the process that permits local communities to participate in decision making at the various levels of tourism development. It includes sharing benefits from tourism development and determining the type and scale of tourism development in their localities".

Drake (1991) elucidates that there are three level of development where local community can participate,

which includes planning, implementation and sharing benefits. At the level of planning, the participation includes problem identification, alternative formulation, activity planning and resource allocation. At the level of implementation participation includes management and operation of development activities and programmes. While at the stage of sharing benefits the participation means the reception of economic, socio-political and cultural benefits (Drake, 1991). Therefore based on above literature, the scope of community participation in this research includes participation in tourism decision making or planning where people participate in the thinking process; participation in tourism operation and management where people involved by taking actions in operating tourism activities; and participation in benefits from tourism where people have a share in tourism benefits. As Community participation plays a role in the development of tourism destinations likewise it has a role to play in disaster response (Patterson, Weil & Patel, 2010) and has played a role in image recovery during the tourism crisis (Avraham, 2016).

## Research Methodology

The focus of the study was to explore the role of local community participation in destination image rebuilding during the crisis and to propose a model for the future researcher to validate the results. The researcher had chosen the mixed methodology for the present study. The data collected by using both primary and secondary sources available. The primary data collected by using an in-depth semi-structured interview from the respondents. According to Longhurst (2009) “The In-depth, semi-structured interviews are the verbal interchanges where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions”. Even though interviewers tend to prepare a list of predetermined questions, in-depth, semi-structured interviews usually unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to pursue issues they feel are essential. The unit of analysis was the local community of Srinagar city of Kashmir valley of Jammu and Kashmir, India. The data collected during August-September 2018. The researcher conducted the interviews with the help of the postgraduate students, who were pursuing their Master degree in travel and tourism management, Central University of Kashmir, Kashmir (J&K), India.

Whereas, the Content analysis was undertaken to review and analyse the existing literature involving community participation in crisis and image rebuilding. The distinguishing characteristics of content analysis should be objective, systematic, and quantitative (Kassarjian, 1977; Krueger & Casey, 2009). First, researchers need to develop precise rules and categories of analysis so that analysts can apply to the same body of content and generate the same results (Berelson, 1952). These rules and categories minimize the analyst’s subjective predispositions and selective perception (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Besides, the characteristic of objectivity in content analysis separates it from literary criticism because the latter is lacking replicability (Kassarjian, 1977). Second, consistently applying objective rules on each component of content analysis and securing the relevance of data to interesting questions demonstrate the requirement of systematisation (Holsti, 1969). The analysis strategies and rules should be documented, understood, and articulated by each member of a research team (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Third, the quantification requirement implies that “the data be amenable to statistical methods not only for precise and parsimonious summary of findings but also for interpretation and inference” (Kassarjian, 1977, p. 10). The procedure of content analysis includes categorising articles into six main components: (a) unitising, (b) sampling, (c) recording/coding, (d) reducing, (e) inferring, and (f) narrating. (Krippendorff 2004), the first four components constitute the process of “data making,” and create computable data from raw texts (Krippendorff, 2004). The last two use the information generated from the previous four components and help researchers to search for and generate the potential answers to research questions.

**Table 1: Showing the Sampling Criteria Used**

| <i>Sampling criteria</i> |                                                                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Topic selection</b>   | Crisis Management and Local Community, Destination Image Rebuilding,              |
| Data Type                | Articles in academic journals                                                     |
| Data Source              | Database searching (EBSCO, UGC infibnet and Science Direct) and reference mining. |
| Keywords                 | Crisis Management, Disaster, Image Rebuilding, Local Community                    |
| Publication Date         | 1986 to 2016                                                                      |

Thus, based on an overview of the extant literature initiated, 90 to 105 journal articles published from 1986 to 2016 are reviewed and coded. Besides, later on, data

from 44 journals were collected under the relevance of the subject.

**Table 2: Showing the Number of Journals Selected to Collect the Final Data**

| <i>Name of the Journals</i>                                                                                   | <i>No. of selected</i> | <i>Name of the Journals</i>                                                             | <i>No. of selected</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies                                                                      | 1                      | Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing                                                   | 9                      |
| Annals of Tourism Research                                                                                    | 4                      | Industrial and Environmental Crisis Quarterly                                           | 1                      |
| Tourism Management                                                                                            | 7                      | Leadership & Organization Development Journal                                           | 1                      |
| Journal of Travel Research                                                                                    | 3                      | Academy of Management Executive                                                         | 1                      |
| Annual review of sociology                                                                                    | 1                      | Geoforum                                                                                | 1                      |
| Journal of Community Psychology                                                                               | 1                      | International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning                          | 1                      |
| Population Research and Policy Review                                                                         | 1                      | Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management                                           | 2                      |
| Journal of Sustainable tourism                                                                                | 2                      | Pensando en Voz Alta IV: Innovadores Estudios de Caso sobre Instrumentos Participativos | 1                      |
| Disaster Prevention and Management                                                                            | 2                      | Tourism Imaginaries. Anthropological Approaches                                         | 1                      |
| The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly                                                     | 1                      | Athens Journal of Tourism                                                               | 1                      |
| South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage                                                                   | 2                      |                                                                                         |                        |
| Total number of forty-four journal paper consulted for the present research paper (Number excludes the books) |                        |                                                                                         |                        |

## Discussion

Local communities are the vital catalysts in promoting tourism destination. They play a crucial role in the development of tourism destination, especially in crisis (Patterson, Weil & Patel, 2010). One of the devastating and long-lasting impacts of crisis is that it tarnishes the image of destinations that are being formed as a year's of practices. Local community plays an essential role in rebuilding the image of destination (Abraham, 2016). After the in-depth interview with local community certain important points were carved out, which shows how local community participation plays a role in destination image rebuilding during the crisis.

In order to collect the information from the local community, knowing their perception about recovering or rebuilding the image of the tourist destination, locals were contacted for conducting the interviews. Total 85 peoples from various backgrounds like students, teachers

employees from the tourism department and few of them belonged to the business class category. However, only 27 peoples were agreed to participate in the in-depth interviews. The set of questions were asked about the central theme of how the image of the Kashmir valley as a tourist destination could be rebuilt during the crisis.

During the in semi depth interviews and content analysis the following main themes were identified:

- i) Community participation in conservation and tourism development.
- ii) Local risk assessment.
- iii) Community resilience
- iv) Private-public collaboration.
- v) Social Media.
- vi) Promoting unexplored Destination & Cultural Diversity.
- vii) Making Tourists feel Safe.



**Fig. 1:** Depicting the Role of Local Community Participation in Destination Image Rebuilding During the Crisis

Source: Authors own work

### i) Community Participation in Conservation and Tourism Development

The people living in the community work together with mutual understating among themselves in order the attain common objective of making their living place a better one, forms the community participation. In such an arrangement, the relations and interactions between members of the community are essential for creating strong bonds and relationships. Moreover, community involvement creates a sense of belongingness among community members.

According to Authors Jamal & Stronza (2009), The involvement of local community in the development of tourism industry is significant as it narrow the gap between use resources at destination and its governance. Besides the economic multiplier effect that the local communities mount up from tourism, their involvement in tourism development is well beneficial. Jamal & Stronza (2009) in their work has highlighted the role played by local community in development of tourism. They emphasised, the local community creates an active environment for economic development, scientific & local knowledge,

social empowerment, cross-cultural appreciation, and experience for tourist learning and protection of culture and heritage of the destination. Moreover, community participation can install a sense of pride in the community. Community participation can play a crucial role in crisis-hit areas, and it will help in tourism development in the area and eventually will lead to conservations of the area.

### ii) Community Participation in Local Risk Assessment

The risk recognition is best managed in advance at the local level. The perception, assessment and knowledge of risks and crises in communities are influenced by individuals' relationship with their physical and social environment. Rural and urban residents evaluate crisis plans differently and will follow recommended actions during a crisis differently. So, it can be said that an assessment of the risk is incomplete without the participation of the local community. Honduran and Nicaraguan governments have supported a new approach to risk management that was grounded with community participation. As the locals are well aware of the place where they live, they can contribute well for the development of the place by assessing the

risk during from disasters and crisis (Solo, Godinot & Velasco, 2013). Therefore, the host community should be encouraged to come forward and may play an essential role in crisis-hit tourist destination recover the image.

### iii) Community Resilience

Community resilience “entails the ongoing and developing capacity of the community to account for its vulnerabilities and develop capabilities that aid that community” (Chandra et al. 2011). The concept of community resilience refers to the ability of the human system to respond and recover to an unusual event. Community resilience is the natural tendency, to face the un-happening in the environment and to adapt against it. According to Cutter et al (2002), community resilience is tendency of the local community to recognize the crisis, make necessary changes against it and learn to face such incident. The UK government in 2010, for example, defines community resilience as “communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services”. ([www2.eastriding.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=114062](http://www2.eastriding.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=114062)). At the time of crisis, the immediate help available is always in the form of local, they are first ones who can respond the emergency at the place. Therefore, it can be said that the capability of the local community plays a pivotal role in harnessing the crisis.

### iv) Private-Public Collaboration

As per Johnston et al. (2012) “The international research on recovery highlights the importance of not only strong local government capacity but also of a cohesive system of public, private and volunteer groups integrated into the community”. When a significant part of the workforce is engaged in the private sector like Hoteliers, Tour Operators, NGO's, Media Centers, Private Banks, responsibility for building community resilience cannot rest upon the public sector alone. Thus, all sectors must collaborate to build community-level disaster resilience (NRC 2011). The local community should be allowed to take participation in tourism decision making like involving them during policy formations, travel advisory formations, tourism development initiatives in crisis-hit areas. Locals can help

in bringing new tourism destinations on tourism map and flourish the crisis hit destination.

### v) Social Media

We are living in the age of information communication technology, where technology drives economies. Social media has been an essential component of ICT; Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram has changed the way of business across the globe. Social Media has become a new trend to promote any business especially the tourism industry. Social Media has the power to make a hype of events or happening whether positively or negatively. Kashmir being the conflict-hit destinations needs the tool like social media in order the rebuilt its image. The local community can use the tool of social media, in recovering the image of its destination which faded as an outcome of the crisis. Tourism department of J&K has used the tool of social media to offset the negative perception against Kashmir Tourism. They have uploaded the video by the name “Kashmir the warmest place on earth” that displays the hospitality nature of native people of Kashmiri's. And in Just 24 hours from the time of upload, the video got thirty five thousand views on Youtube and fifteen lakh views on Facebook

### vi) Promoting Unexplored Destination & Cultural Diversity

The local community can help in bringing new tourist destinations on the tourism map and will flourish the industry. The local people can highlight their cultural diversity that can have a magnetising effect on tourists. According to daily Tribune (2 April 2018), A group of 360 youth from various districts of Jammu have gathered to promote the unexplored destinations of Jammu.

They explore those unexplored destinations and then make those places know to the other people, so that they too can visit those places which are potential to be a tourist destinations.

### vii) Making Tourists Feel Safe

While travelling from one place to other places in search of leisure, pleasure or recreation the first and far most

concern of every tourist is safety and security. Safety and security is the primary concern of tourist downfall at the crisis-hit destination, and it leads to negative perception in the minds of tourists. The local community can play a very signification role in mitigating this negative perception that is in the minds of tourists. The hospitality, humbleness and generosity make the tourist feel safe and secure. Tourists derive more pleasure by interacting with local people, and their friendly nature will help in rebuilding tourist destination in crisis-hit areas. As per The Indian Express 20 October, 2018 report “The Jammu and Kashmir is the state in the country with zero crime record against tourists”. The Place is known a safe place for solo women’s (Trip Advisor India).

## Conclusion

Accepting the permanence of tourism industry that plays a crucial role in the development of the area has always been prone to crisis. Natural disasters and human caused events such as political outrage have adverse effect on the tourism industry and the people living at the place. Despite the fact problem of crisis is very much complex process, but it can be managed with the cooperation of government agencies, academicians, local community and tourism practitioners. Tourism crisis begins after a disaster whether natural or human-made unusual event occurs, but it continues to escalate with the negative media coverage and leads to staining on designation image. Moreover, it results in plummet of tourist flow, and has impacts on profitability of tourism industry (Sönmez, Backman, & Allen 1994; Wahab 1996; Tarlow 1998). So, there must be proper crisis management strategies in order to recover the image of the destination. However, crisis management strategies will be successful only when there will be full involvement of the local community.

The conclusion of the present study reveals that the local community has an immense role to play in order to rebuild the image of a tourism destination. The local community has a role to play in conservation and development of tourism at the destination; during the crisis, they are the leading player of risk assessment because they are native to place. The programmes in collaboration with locals are always beneficial for the overall development of the destination. The local communities are the one who can make the tourist feel as safe by their generosity, and they

can become the brand ambassadors for their destination by the use of social media.

Local community plays a pivotal role as far as promotion is concerned, it will create a good image on social media. Besides, the local community will foster to develop strategies to manage the crisis by the involvement in the decision-making process. As safety and security is the first and foremost concern of every individual, tourists while selecting a destination to travel has this concern also in their mind. The local community has power in making tourists feel Safe. Besides, there are people with leadership and project management skills have intimate knowledge of geography, social and cultural environment; and have close friends they grew up in the area.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations, many of which may help those conducting future studies. First, the generalizability of the study findings is one of the limitations of this study, as the present study, the in-depth semi structured interview method was used to explore the various dimensions where the local community may participate in rebuilding the destination image of the Kashmir valley during the crisis. Thus, other studies may be conducted involving both qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies. Moreover, the study has employed an in-depth semi-structured interview of the local community only. The future researchers can use other methods of interviews and broaden the scope by involving key stakeholders such as tourists, government agencies. Also, the present study was carried out in Kashmir, similar studies at other such destinations shall be carried out in order to study the role of the local community in destination image rebuilding during and after the crisis.

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