

TOURISM IN MOUNTAIN AND REMOTE REGIONS

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Abstract. *Alpine regions offer tourists unique experiences and opportunities to enjoy the fresh air, water, and diverse landscapes of the mountain terrains. With an increasing competitive tourism environment, even the most remote destinations are faced with the challenge of market differentiation. Mountain regions that relied on snow sports and event will have to consider alternatives due to shorter winter recreational seasons. Many mountain communities must examine alternative forms of economic activities in order to extend their tourism season. Transitioning a region beyond the traditional mainstay of tourism activities also requires a unique and concentrated approach that involves the support of the local residents.*

One location that can differentiate itself from a winter Alpine tourism location is Sappada, Italy. Opportunities exist for Sappada, a remote mountain community located in the Dolomites of Italy, to promote a sustainable tourism management system along with practical strategies that can help to highlight the unique natural, cultural, and historical attributes of this mountain region. This paper examines a number of case studies that demonstrate the success of the Bottom-up Approach for sustainable tourism development and how it can be applied in practice to Sappada and other remote areas.

Key words: *Sustainable tourism, remote regions, mountain tourism, niche marketing, Dolomites, Brazil, Italian Riviera, Montserrat*

Introduction

With the tourism industry becoming increasingly complex with new and competing destinations, travelers have more choices than ever before. Coupled with rapidly changing technologies and access to readily available information, the tourists of today have also become more demanding in meeting their increasing expectations. These new and sophisticated tourists are more inclined to seek new experiences beyond what the mass tourism market offers such as the gated, all-inclusive resort that is removed from community interests (Kim, Borges and Chon, 2006). As tourists gain experience traveling, their confidence grows and they seek out more unusual activities that move them beyond what they have experienced through prior travels. This results in a tourist that seeks experiences in new cultural experiences as well as unspoiled destinations (Butler and Hinch, 1996; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1998).

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While the experienced tourist of today seeks new places to visit, many also want to enrich their travels by participating in various cultural activities first hand. Visiting a new and exciting destination in a remote area of the globe provides a learning experience for the tourist who can then share with their friends back home the uniqueness of the experience they have seen and lived. Learning exotic rituals and ways of life through cultural immersion, or participation in traditional activities from the creative minds of an indigenous population are a few ways in which the tourist can benefit (Inskeep, 1991; Craik, 1997). While learning various ways of life and becoming more understanding of cultural differences, the tourist can also develop an enriched vision of one's self and the world (Pearce, Moscardo and Ross, 1996; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000a).

The need for niche tourism marketing is a result of higher tourist expectations and increasing competition. With tourists seeking to experiment in unique cultural experiences through contact with the indigenous population, benefits for both parties can exist (McDonnell, Allen and O'Toole, 1999; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000b). Opportunities such as the diversification of the economic base, income generation, an increased standard of living, investment in conservation of the environment, and projects that help to preserve the local culture and traditions can exist (Getz, 1987; Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis and Mules, 2000). However, if not properly managed, undesirable consequences may also develop that can lead to a diminution and dilution of the local culture (Davis, Allen and Consenza, 1988; Derrett, 2000).

The community of Sappada is one of the most authentic alpine mountain communities located in the Dolomites of Italy. With history dating back nearly 800 years the village is rich with traditions. This unique ethnic group, has an old local language (the Plodar, a medieval German dialect), carnival rituals (Vosenòcht), typical wood house architecture, wooden mask artcrafts, and a strong connection with nature (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell and Harris, 2002). Since 1920 Sappada has been known as one of the first Alpine tourist destinations, and distinguished by a rich history of Olympic athletes that are residents of the region (Sappada.info, 2008).

However, increasingly warmer temperatures in the mountain region have produced a shortening of the lucrative winter ski season, and the community of Sappada has realized the need to diversify and broaden the reasons for tourists to visit their lovely community. Involvement of the local community in direct and responsible tourism development with respect to nature, history, and local traditions was the goal (Sherman and Dixon, 1991; Tisdell, 2006). The Bottom-up Approach was introduced and attracted strong participation

from the local community (Ryan and Montgomery, 1994; Agrusa, 2000; Dwyer, Agrusa and Coats, 2001). Tourism meetings helped to build local teams of volunteers who created a plan for strategically operating and serving tourism.

The Municipality of Sappada, along with Italian government authorities, and the residents of Sappada, founded the Associazione Turistica della Comunità di Sappada, as their first marketing organization. The Sappada "GO Project" was another community initiated organization that was broadly supported by the local community and directly involved the younger generation with practical activities for sustainable tourism development. Participation of the younger generation promoted a change in the local community tourism behavior, as well as success in implementing changing tourism activities to address alternative tourism activity for the area. The Sappada "GO Project" was created to incorporate best practices and to stimulate positive initiatives for a number of historical and cultural tourism activities (Crompton & McKay 1994). The results identified and developed a number of unique events that were offered throughout the low, shoulder tourist season (Long and Perdue, 1990; Bowdin, McDonnell, Allen, and O'Toole, 2001; Arcodia and Whitford, 2002).

Over and above the potential economic benefits from additional visitation, there are many reasons why communities organize events. These reasons include: enhancing or preserving local culture and history and providing local recreation and leisure opportunities. Festivals also offer the potential to 'showcase' a region and to foster local organizational development, leadership and networking, all of which are critical underpinnings of community based tourism development. Festivals provide a substantial vehicle to share with visitors what is distinctive about communities. Getz (1997) and McDonnell, Allen and O'Toole (1999) suggest that events serve to assist in the development or maintenance of community or regional identity. Derrett (2000) argues events and festivals play a significant role in reflecting lifestyle choices made by residents. Indeed, Festivals are at the interface of three dynamic features of regional communities: the 'community' representing the 'sense of place' of residents; the 'exchange sector of 'tourism' representing the visitors; and the elements of image and identity which reflect the message received in the marketplace (Derrett, 2000).

The Sappada "GO Project" also introduced new technology and an innovative website to promote the Alpine area. With the help of the younger generation, who had experience with the latest technology, implemented several initiatives that helped to market and expose the attributes of the region. The use of new technology not only provided an educational activity for the youth of the community but also provided the younger generation an opportunity to directly

participate in the success of their economic prosperity (Malhotra, 2001) Having youth participation was of particular importance since they helped to advocate the alternative tourism possibilities for the region and also to develop entrepreneurial activities that would provide them with incentives to maintain their interest in advancing the future of their community.

As a result of those projects or initiatives, a number of notable events now take place in Sappada to extend the tourist season. One example is the Mask Carnival which is an event where carved wooden masks that are common artwork among local families are worn at the traditional Mask Carnival. The carnival is also a “cathartic practice” that allows people to once a year express the “other side” of human psyche. Another successful event is the Sappamukki which is a culinary themed festival that focuses on foods made from local dairy products. As a result the autumn tourism season is now 10 days longer thanks to the Sappamukki Culinary Week Festival which attracts a new type of tourist for the area known as gastronomy tourists. Gastronomy tourism is a type of tourism that integrates eating unique foods from a specific destination (Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Finally, the Full Mountain Hospitality Conference is another event initiated by the “GO Project” that is an international gathering of tourism experts who are interested in Alpine sustainability tourism. This nature based educational experiment offers the community a prolonged tourist season.

Cultural Tourism Management

When the local population of a tourist destination is actively involved in the decision making process and planning for the development of tourism activities a greater sense of ownership exists over their future (Agrusa, 2006). This Bottom-up Approach to tourism development empowers local citizens to become engaged in tourism activities and encourages decision making opportunities in deciding what, where, when, how, and to whom their culture will be exposed. When the needs of the community portraying its own cultural heritage come first, cultural tourism management is more sustainable than when it is imposed from above or by outsiders (Kanahele, 1991). More than simply providing opportunities to be heard but allowing the community to be active participants rather than mere spectators of tourism development is central to the Bottom-up Approach. Placing the needs of the host population first is an example of responsible tourism and is essential for marketing a cultural and sustainable tourist destination (Seaton and Bennett, 1996).

By establishing the individual and community needs first, the individuals in the community who are closest to interacting with the tourist are in control, or

at the very least, have a voice or say in how tourism is developed, spotlighting the lifestyle of everyday people (Agrusa, 2002). This cultural and sustainable tourism approach promotes the authentic traditions of a culture and encourages tourists to “get off the road”. In the process, cultural and sustainable tourism also encourages and empowers local residents to be more engaged with tourists because they were involved from the beginning in deciding how their culture will be represented to others and can own the successes because they have met the challenges along the way as well (Davis, Allen and Cosenza, 1988; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000b).

With the increasing demand for cultural and sustainable tourism, politicians and other decision makers are becoming more aware and acknowledge that cultural tourism as an economic resource deserves management and particularly in light of issues such as environmental quality and cultural opportunities (Madrigal, 1995). In addition, proponents point out that using the Bottom-up Approach to manage and develop cultural and sustainable tourism diversifies the economic base of a region and provides practical incentives to preserve a region and its people’s special characteristics and artifacts (Agrusa, 2002).

Tourism development in the absence of the Bottom-up Approach, can reduce a local culture to crass stereotypes, two-dimensional cutouts poorly understood by visitors and producing self-loathing among the local population (Agrusa, Coats and Donlon, 2003). When done correctly tourism can create interest in the past, inform the tourist and lead to the development of the mindful traveler that often leads to an increased appreciation of the many cultural and historic resources of the area (Moscardo, 1999). Unbridled or poorly managed tourism development, in other words, may contribute to turning a unique characteristic into something humdrum and trivial. There can be little doubt, Moscardo (1999) argues, that a sincere, good faith desire to learn about and move among the world’s inventory of historic areas, sites, and related settings motivates many tourist visits. Nurturing a Bottom-up Approach to tourism development can allow a tourist to experience and leave the region with a deeper appreciation of the community that has been represented and with many enjoyable memories.

The Bottom-up Approach in Practice **Case of Prainha do Canto Verde**

Prainha do Canto Verde is a fishing village in the northeast of Brazil. With seemingly endless sandy beaches, dune-covered landscape, and pristine lagoons, Prainha do Canto Verde is one of those places one could call

“paradise.” This village is the home for 200 families, totalling 1,200 inhabitants. Prainha is located 125 kilometres southeast of Fortaleza, capital city of the Brazilian federal State of Ceara (Studienkreis, 2003).

The residents of this paradise-like village make their living and subsistence from a craft-type fishing carried out in their traditional rafts named “Jangadas”. Fishing is the main source of income, and a large portion of the food that the villagers consume comes from the ocean. The inland population lives out of commercializing cashew products such as nuts and juices, palm wax, and subsistence farming.

Prainha’s inhabitants, after their lengthy struggle to preserve their lands, knew that tourist development would eventually arrive and expose the village’s environment and culture to tourists. Eventually, a real estate development company would propose the construction of hotels or summer houses. Furthermore, low-end tourists were coming in large numbers to picnic on the beach, leaving garbage behind and putting stress on the local people (SOS Zona Costeira, 2003). Rather than trying to prevent all change, the people of Prainha do Canto Verde took a proactive approach and openly discussed the possibility of development through tourism with a Bottom-up Approach. They posed simple but deep questions: what kind of tourism do we want in our village? What do we not want in our village? If tourists are going to come, what kind of outcome do we want from this tourism?

These questions were discussed in village assemblies and small working groups. Through this inquiry method an in-depth understanding of how local residents in Prainha felt about tourism and how residents in other villages, where tourism was already developed, perceived the effects that tourism had on their community. The residents of Prainha found that in the surrounding villages there was an increase in income for some villagers and the creation of a few jobs. However, it was also identified that most of the tourism businesses, such as restaurants and hotels, were run and operated by outsiders causing economic leakage and only a small percentage of the profits stayed within the villages. The rapid emergence of hotels and summer houses built by outsiders brought a considerable change in the architecture and the general look of the village with very few fisherman retaining titles to their lands (SOS Zona Costeira, 2003; Studienkreis, 2003).

Through dialogue sessions, the villagers’ concluded that tourism should be implemented but controlled and limited development. While creating opportunities for additional income and new jobs, tourism development should

follow a self-administered model managed by the local villagers. Thus the villager's could guarantee that the income and profit would stay in the village to benefit the local economy, preserving their land and premises as well as their social, cultural, and environmental assets.

Prainha's dwellers had mixed feelings as they became acquainted with the risks and opportunities involved in their everyday economic, social, and cultural lives. In order to draw a blueprint for tourism development, the Tourism council of Prainha do Canto Verde organized a three day Conference for Sustainable Tourism with the participation of various interest groups within the village such as fisherman, women, men, youth, teachers, and craft-workers. This is unusual for Prainha because within most villages in the area of northern Brazil, only the male elders make the decisions for the village whereas women and children are not involved.

Since the Bottom-up Approach to tourism has been implemented, a positive impact on the social, economic, cultural, and environmental aspects of the village has resulted. With the creation of income generation opportunities, entrepreneurial endeavors (restaurants, sleeping facilities, tourist attractions) are owned and operated by locals along with the village cooperative, ensuring that the profits remain in the village. Tour guides are local youth that have the opportunity to add to their families' income.

In order to serve seminars and conventions held at the village, service provider teams were created. The teams are responsible for everything from the design of the menu, to the purchase of raw materials, cooking, serving the food as well as washing the dishes. There are also various teams, such as the "cake" and "coffee" team, responsible for the coffee and cake served at coffee breaks during meetings and seminars. Trail guides, producers of handicraft, and restaurant and guest house owners, all consisted of different people, ensuring that new income sources are created and opportunities are spread throughout the community.

The decision to implement tourism, the type of tourists to be welcomed, and the types of activities to be carried out were all decisions made by the community as a whole through a democratic and inclusive decision-making process based on equitable dialogue among members of the community. With the creation of the various councils (i.e., Tourism Council, Education Council), all stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process, which is the essence of the Bottom-up Approach to tourism development.

The Bottom-up Approach to cultural tourism was instrumental in solidifying the local culture of Prainha do Canto Verde through the preservation and strengthening of communitarian values. The villagers are proud of who they are and where they live. With the creation of new jobs and opportunities for locals and reinforcement of the local culture, the younger generations are less likely to leave the village to seek better living conditions in large metropolitan cities. The community values that were threatened in the past were restored. Youth at school learn and discuss the real meaning of their culture and the consequences of breaking the cultural values that bond them together (Butler and Hinch, 1996; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). In a vast repertory of songs at the schools choir, the children's voices sing about their history, the animals, the ocean, cultural values, and preservation.

Prainha implemented an environmental awareness and conservation effort. The community as a whole is engaged in recycling garbage and implementing other measures to create an environmentally sustainable village. Prainha's fishermen are the leaders in the fight against predatory fishing and in favor of sustainability among the fishing villages in the east of the State of Ceara. By limiting the number of visitors to 45 at a time, the carrying capacity of the village is being preserved and minimizing any potential negative impacts from tourism. Available activities take place in a natural setting and considering the nature of the activities, cause very low impact to the ecosystem. The children's choir created the GPT – Grupo de Protetores das Tartarugas (Turtle Protection Group), an initiative to educate their families about the importance of preserving marine turtles and turtle eggs. The GPT also has dolphins and manatees in their care. The annual eco-regatta is a show of creativity where local children paint the sails of the Jangadas (small local fishing boats) with eco-friendly messages. The themes are part of environmental education campaigns including themes such as: "The bottom of the sea", "The ocean, the child and the marine manatee" other themes that are in the eco-regatta are about medicinal plants, the history of the village, the history of the fisheries movement (Studienkreis, 2003).

Villagers recognize that tourism development is an on-going process requiring diligence and hard work in monitoring results and taking appropriate measures to fill in the gaps in the process. The results have been positive with a capital reserves fund that distributes a portion of the profit to the social and education fund. This fund is used to finance small projects or events such as the yearly party for the elderly people of the community, as well as establish donations to the legal defense fund or educational projects. In order to help preserve the culture of the village Prainha ensures that the main form of income is fishing with tourism as a secondary source.

Case of La Repubblica Del Pesto

Located in an area of Spotorno, Italy on the western coast of the Italian Riviera, La Repubblica Del Pesto, adopted the Bottom-up Approach to tourism development. Their tourism activities became oriented towards the development of sustainability and the promotion of cultural, historical and culinary values typical for the Ligurian tourist area. The tourist image of the Spotorno area has been as a sea and sand location, with tourists interested in the summer seasonal marine tourism.

The area of Spotorno, however, went to its roots to develop its culinary tourism or gastronomy tourism and specifically focusing on pesto sauce. Culinary tourism has become a key factor in differentiating the vacation experience, and thus one of the high growth areas of tourism. Pesto from this area is a pure, simple Italian basil sauce that has been exported all over the world. With one of the most important elements of the tourism experience being food, culinary tourism in Italy has gained increasing attention (Hall and Sharples, 2003). Recently, there has been a growing interest in culinary tourism or food tourism from researchers as well as from the tourism industry itself (Oh, Kim and Shin, 2004). A number of research studies have demonstrated that adapting culinary tourism to an area's marketing strategy has diversified and added value to the area's tourism products (Hall, Johnson and Mitchell, 2000; Hall, Mitchell and Sharples, 2003).

An official inauguration event: "pestata rituale collettiva (common pesto ritual)", as a preparation ceremony for the typical pesto sauce was celebrated by the Spotorno community population and was considered the start up event for this new tourism initiative for the area. The cultivated objective of the event was the "sacrification" of a traditional value (the preparation of Pesto salsa). The result was an event that was adopted as a new reference element of the tourist destination and was chosen as the most important in the annual arc for the strong involvement of the local community. The start up of this event also provided the opportunity to create the Repubblica del Pesto Association with various other project activities that emerged, for example, a culinary festival by the local operators.

The outcomes of this project helped develop a new marketing image for the Spotorno region with the addition of culinary tourism. As a result, the British Broadcasting Channel (BBC) in the U.K. travelled to Spotorno and filmed the "common pesto ritual" that was broadcast on British television and later world-wide to validate the concept and brand of the Repubblica Del Pesto. The tourism benefits to the Spotorno area by emphasizing their local cuisine

as well as having the town and culture filmed and shown to a world-wide audience on BBC television program has increased their destination's image and competitiveness.

Mountainous area of Montserrat

The mountainous and volcanic island of Montserrat, a British Overseas territory, is located in the Eastern Caribbean. Since 1995 the tiny island of less than 40 square miles has faced devastating volcanic activity that remains active today (British Geological Survey, 2008). Nearly destroying two-thirds of the island from pyroclastic volcanic flows, the remaining one-third of the island boasts tropical beaches, lush forests, and clean water to name a few. With inhabitants living on the remaining one-third of the island, this small population base has dwindled from 12,000 to a low of 3,500 in 1997 when many citizens relocated to neighboring islands in the Caribbean, United Kingdom, and United States (Cassell, 2006). Today, Montserrat has a population base of nearly 5,079 residents (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). Challenged with high transportation costs, dependence on exports, and a limited resource base typical of many island economies, the island of Montserrat is developing their tourism industry. With a number of natural, cultural, and historical attractions opportunities exist to develop Montserrat as an alternative tourism destination.

In Montserrat, opportunities are being pursued to develop a niche market in the area of cultural and nature based alternative tourism. The island of Montserrat, in the West Indies, is a British overseas territory. With a dynamic cultural and historical background, the island is a tropical retreat that is popularly known as the "Emerald Island of the Caribbean" (Montserrat Tourist Board, 2008). The multitude of natural resources from black sand beaches, mountainous landscapes, lush forests, and an active volcano offer a tranquil yet exciting appeal for tourists (Pulsipher, 2001). Some examples include the use of such natural phenomena as the active Soufrière Hills Volcano with the development of an observatory to view an active volcano which is taking a negative attribute and using it as a positive tourism attraction.

The Soufriere Hills Volcano has been erupting with lava flowing since 1995 which is similar to the volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii which is the most visited attraction on that Pacific Island destination. According to the Hawaii state Department of Business Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT), Hawaii's Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island of Hawaii was the second most visited site on all of the Hawaiian Islands with 1,467,779 visitors in 2007, second only to the USS Arizona Memorial with 1.6 million visitors (Dingeman, 2009). Other tourism entities include the development of traditional festivals

such as the Montserrat Masquerades at Christmas or the recently developed Calabash Festival that features the best of Montserrat culture and other events that convey the tradition of Montserrat which can also attract former residents to return to the island for heritage tourism. A newly constructed multipurpose cultural and community center built on Montserrat with multi-media capability is a valuable asset that may provide a focal point for bringing together events with input from the local community. Furthermore, festivals and events identified by the local residents of Montserrat can help the community to realize their own potential and uniqueness of a culture that can then be communicated to other tourists.

While Montserrat faces numerous challenges, many opportunities also exist in regard to sustainable tourism development. Infrastructure elements such as a new airport, world-class Montserrat Cultural Center, and the Montserrat Volcano Observatory are assets that are already available. In other respects, the island is left unspoiled by a legacy of mass tourism facilities.

With only one-third of the tiny mountainous island of Montserrat being habitable for residents, opportunities still exist for tourism development as a sustainable solution for the island's economic challenges. With a number of natural, historical, and cultural attractions still on the island, tourism activities may help to stimulate the economy and if managed effectively, help to retain the rich traditions of this eastern Caribbean island.

The Bottom-up Approach to tourism development in Montserrat has been a practical and community based solution for the island and supports the goal of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to "help communities help themselves" (Barclay, Bishop and Hawes, 2005:3). Montserratians have already embraced aspects of the Bottom-up Approach as exemplified by the successful Calabash Festival, just completing its third year. With advances in technology and the internet providing new marketing opportunities the remoteness of a community can be connected and marketed on a global platform and can result in an asset for the island, mountainous regions, and other remote areas of the world.

Discussion

One of their first steps of the Bottom-up Approach is for the residents to define how they want their culture is to be portrayed while addressing how accommodations and other services will be provided. Agrusa, Coats and Donlon (2003), argue that the Bottom-up Approach to tourism development includes "spotlighting the everyday lives of everyday people." While local

residents have the opportunity to realize that this harmony could be easily jeopardized depending on the type and number of incoming tourists, many once isolated villages and cultures will eventually be in contact with modern tourists who are more than willing to experiment with what unique cultures have to offer. With the implementation of the Bottom-up Approach to tourism development in which the priorities of the local community are first taken into consideration and villagers are in control of the development process, a sustainable economic alternative in tourism can emerge with less liability for the local community. Benefits can range from the creation of additional income, local economic development, reinforcement of the local culture, and empowerment of minorities to participate in environmental conservation.

Facilitating sustainable tourism involves community input and decision making. As examined in the previous cases of Prainha do Canto Verde, La Repubblica Del Pesto, and Montserrat a successful approach to tourism development lies in the hands of the local community itself. Promoting community participation in the decision making and designing processes to evaluate opportunities and challenges in tourism development will enable sustainable tourism in an area such as Sappada.

With community collaboration and problem-solving processes in place, tourism activities may include strategies that build upon the unique natural, historical, and cultural attributes of Sappada. Developing a unique cultural tourism destination is more sustainable when the community is actively involved in the decision making process using the Bottom-up Approach. When planning tourism facilities and activities using the Bottom-up Approach, the local community has a greater sense of ownership over their future and they can become more positively engaged with tourists and tourism activities. With the demand for cultural and sustainable tourism increasing, decision makers need to become attentive to issues such as the natural environmental quality and cultural opportunities, and seeing these issues as economic resources rather than impediments to development.

Future research should focus on identifying specific strategies and niche markets that can be successfully targeted and introduced to the area of Sappada. With a Bottom-up Approach as a blueprint for tourism development, sustainable tourism can be supported and more easily achieved. Involving all generations of the community in this approach also provides reciprocal learning opportunities to connect the experience of senior residents with the younger generations of the community to promote change in the tourism management system. Residents of Sappada can begin to ask themselves simple but deep

questions: what kind of tourism do we want in our region? What do we not want in our region? If tourists are going to come, what kind of outcome do we want from this tourism and what should the tourists take away from visiting our region? What resources and infrastructure elements are in place, what gaps exist, and how do we fill these gaps? The Bottom-up Approach is simple in many ways but also extremely powerful and provides long term solutions to tourism development.

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