

Linking social capital and people's involvement in the tourism context of Sri Lanka: Special Reference to the Mirrisa, Galle district

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the association between Linking Social Capital (LSC) and People's Involvement (PI) in the tourism context. LSC is one of the essential factors that influence PI in tourism activities. While the local people link them with government authority, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), financial institutions, tourism industries, donor agencies, and experts, they can acquire financial and non-financial assistance to involve in local tourism activities, and they can get the support from the Decision Making and Problem Solving (DMPS) of tourism planning and development. Data were collected from 65 respondents through self-administered questionnaires with a 1-7 Likert scale. The mean values of the independent and dependent variables were calculated and correlation analysis was employed in SPSS to identify the association between LSC and PI. The results revealed that there is a positive association between LSC and PI in the tourism context. Therefore, it can be emphasized that LSC enhances the PI in local tourism activities.

Keywords: lining social capital, people's involvement and sustainable tourism industry

Introduction

The Social Capital (SC) is a scientific study of human interaction, the body of knowledge of human behavior, human involvement, and sharing information to achieve the predetermined objectives. SC determines sustainable tourism development (Hwang, 2012). SC includes community links with financial institutions and stakeholders involved in the tourism industry (Grant, 2001; Thammajinda, 2013; Hwang, 2012). LSC refers to the local people's connections with government and private organizations to acquire the resources for economic activities (Woolcock, 1998). Besides, linking capital



is a community connection with voluntary organizations (Sabatini, 2008). In Sri Lanka, there are many potentials for community-based tourism, namely; Ella, Mirisha, Heeloya, Pollonaruwa Town, Happutale, Rekawa Development Foundation, Muthurajawela Marsh Centre, Turtle Conservation Project, Arugam Bay Community Eco Guides Association, Walawe Jungle River Boat Safari, and Walathwewa Community Tourism Initiative.

Consequently, LSC study is missing in the development areas, and LSC is a gateway for the local people to acquire resources (financial assistance, technical advice, and capacity building to get involved in the income generation (Woolcock, 2011). Significantly, people's connection (linking) with relevant stakeholders enhances PI in the tourism industry since local people at the grass-root level get the opportunity for funds, advisory services, technical support and skill development (Thammajinda 2013; Hwang, 2012). Therefore, this study is more significant because there are limited LSC and PI studies in the tourism context. Further, this study will support tourism stakeholders and policymakers in preparing an appropriate development framework for sustainable tourism development in poverty areas. Further, the study's objective is to identify the correlation between LSC PI in the tourism context.

Literature Review

Ekanayake (2006) argued that people's link with external organizations, namely; government institutions, NGOs, donor agencies, volunteer organizations and financial institutions, helps find the resources to get involved in economic activities that contribute to the poverty eradication in the rural areas. Further, Woolcock (2001) argued that LSC is the vertical relationship that is the local community links with the political and legal institutions, which are essential to acquire the resources to get involved in economic activities. Also, LSC enhances access for resources to be involved in achieving common goals in the community (Woolcock, 1998). Consequently, community links with national governments and NGOs are to the grassroots community to get involved in the tourism industry (Claiborne, 2010). Community links with external organizations like funding agencies and government organizations facilitate to acquire financial and expert assistance to encourage the PI in tourism activities (Macbeth, Carson, and Northcote, 2004). Besides, Haywood (1998) explained the community participation as the collective share of the residents, government officers, development agencies, and business holders in decision making and problem-solving in tourism planning and development. Furthermore, Sabatini (2008)



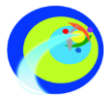
found that LSC connects the local people with civil society organizations and helps carry out advocacy activities through collective action. Consequently, Jeong (2008) found that the success of tourism planning and development is influenced by the PI in local areas. Further, PI in decision making is essential in sustainable tourism development (Claiborne, 2010). Further, LSC induced participation in local tourism activities (Macbeth, Carson & Northcote, 2004). Besides. If the people trust the other people in residence, they would like to participate in the decision-making process of tourism development (Hwang, 2012). Consequently, LSC has strong positive associations with PEI (Involvement in tourism business and tourism-related services) and involvement in DMPS of local tourism activities (Shanmuganathan, Nalin, Gamini & Chandralal, 2020).

Methodology

This is descriptive and explanatory research. A convenience sampling method was used to identify the study area. Mirrissa is in the Galle district of Sri Lanka where community-based tourism is well developed. 65 respondents were getting involved in the tourism business, namely: transport, tour guides, restaurants, cool bars, homestay services, and souvenir businesses selected for the study. Data were collected in January 2020 through respondents administered questionnaires. The respondents were asked to give an opinion about their tourism involvement by rating the numbers varying from 7 to 1, which denotes very highly agreeable to the low level of agreeable, respectively. LSC is the independent variable that included five indicators (People's link with government organizations, tourism industries, financial organization, NGOs and Travel/tour organizations) and the mean values of indicators were calculated. Likewise, PEI (Personal Involvement in tourism activities) and PI in DMPS in tourism activities are the dependent variable, and each variable's mean values were calculated. Data were analyzed in SPSS version 23 and the correlation analysis was employed to identify the association between independent and dependent variables.

Results and Discussions

The mean values of the independent variable (LSC) and dependent variable (PI) were calculated and correlation analysis was employed to examine the correlation between LSC and PI. LSC includes five indicators: People's link with NGOs, government authorities, hotel and tourism industries, financial institutions, and donor agencies. PI includes two indicators: Personal Involvement (PEI) and involvement in DMPS. Results revealed that (as shown in table 1), there is a strong positive correlation between LSC and PEI



{p values is less than 0.05 (0.02**)}. Likewise, a strong positive correlation between LSC and DMPS {p values is less than 0.05 (0.01**)}. Accordingly, if the LSC increases, PEI in tourism activities also increases. Further, if the LSC is high, PI in DMPS of the tourism affairs also high.

Table 1: Results of correlation analysis

		PEI	DMPS
LSC	Person Correlation	0.02**	0.01**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.992	0.850

**Correlation is significant at 0.05

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study's ultimate objective is to examine the correlation between LSC and PI in a tourism context. The results show that there is a strong positive association between LSC and PI. Besides, people's links with government, financial institutions, tourism industry, experts, and NGOs enhance local people's resources to get involved in tourism activity. Likewise, people's link with external organizations motivates people to get involved in the decision making in tourism planning and development, and solving tourism-related issues. This study recommends that tourism policymakers and development agencies should prepare an appropriate development framework that ensures the link of local people with government authorities/NGOs and tourism industries to acquire resources and other assistance to enhance the PI in tourism activities (PEI) and DMPS of local tourism affairs which are essential for the sustainable tourism development.

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