


Chapter 5

Community–Based Tourism Development in Gurez Valley: A Planning Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study examined diverse tourism potentials and possibilities of community-based tourism development (CBTD) in Gurez valley. Desk research approach was adopted in which various theories and cases, apart from the other sources, were reviewed to accomplish the study purpose. The results, based on natural, socio-cultural, symbiotic, and event-based tourism resources, paved a way to design community-based tourism (CBT) model for Gurez valley. The hexagonal CBT model constitutes 1) involvement of local people, 2) training local people, 3) developing cooperative ownership, 4) developing local products, 5) creating partnership, and 6) product marketing. Applications of this model will help tourism planners and decision-makers in developing the community-based tourism and encouraging the local community to participate in CBT activities. Its applications will have direct positive impacts on the local economy, tourism resources, tourist experience, business, infrastructure, jobs, and other related aspects in the area.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism comes in major businesses in the world with millions of human resources and trillions of income in dollars. All the same, efforts are made to use tourism as an instrument in uplifting the poor communities in backward areas by developing tourism (UNWTO, 2020). Utilizing untapped tourism resources, developing tourist attractions, designing tourist circuits, standing infrastructure, framing local markets, creating jobs for local people, and generating income are taken into account when it comes to working on community development through tourism under Community Based Tourism Development (CBTD) concept (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015; Witchayakawin, et al., 2020).

This study aims to understand the feasibility of Community Based Tourism Development (CBTD) and modeling of community-based tourism in Gurez valley in northern Kashmir. Gurez Valley is a beautiful mountainous tourist adobe with rich natural and cultural heritage (Dar, 2018). It is pivotal to have Community Based Tourism in such mountain areas for improving the rural economy, involvement, and empowerment of the local community, sustainability, and poverty reduction (Lama, 2014; Gupta et al, 2018). Monitoring the advantages of Community Based Tourism through research is very important (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018) and the support from the local community is crucial to make it a successful on ground (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015).

Gurez Valley: Study Area

Gurez is the Himalayan Valley located at an altitude of 2400m AMSL in Jammu and Kashmir, a Union Territory (UT) in northern India, nearly 124 km from Srinagar (summer capital of UT). Gurez Valley is a border tourism destination (Dar, 2014) touching the Line of Control (LoC) that separates Indian administered Kashmir (IAK) from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). Gurez Valley remained the gateway to the legendary Silk Route transversely to central Asia in the past (Shaheen, et al., 2017).

Gurez is walled by sky touching, lofty and snow-capped mountains denote diversity in characteristics, appearances, elevation, ruggedness, glacial work, and landmarks that leave the Valley identical to a mesmerizing adobe on the earth. Besides, the fast-flowing and roaring Kishangana River pours through the Gurez valley in a temperate climate (Dar, 2018).

Local people of Gurez belong to the Dard tribe, originally from Gilgit valley (currently in Pakistan). They are quite similar to people living in the upper reaches of mountains in Kashmir in their dress, looks, and various other lifestyles. Despite difficult living in the Valley, Dards have raised themselves and changed their fate

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