



## Community Leaders' Characteristics and Their Effort in Building Community Capacity for Tourism Development in Local Communities

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### Abstract

Community leaders are an important element of any community and vital to successful community development. In a community capacity building approach, community leaders play a vital role in handling the programs and plans towards achieving the goals of the community. This paper investigates relationship between the community leaders' characteristics and their effort in building capacity for tourism development in local communities of Shiraz, Iran. The results from Pearson correlation show that there is a significant positive correlation between age, length of residence, length of position held, income with the level of community capacity building in tourism development. Spearman rho correlation also found there was a significant positive correlation between educational level, tourism income, extra activities, tourism jobs, and family engaged in tourism activities with the level of community capacity building in tourism development.

**Keywords:** Tourism development, Community leaders, Community capacity building

### 1. Introduction

A critical element in building community capacity and community development is community leaders. Building community capacity without community leaders' efforts is not possible. For the purpose of this study, community leader is defined as one who is able to influence policy, opinion, or community action on building capacity for tourism development because of his official role, title, or position in the local community. Community leadership was an important element of any community and vital to successful community development. Without the community leadership, community capacity building in tourism development do not occur (Austen, 2003). Hence, understanding relationship between the leaders' characteristics and their attempt on building capacity in tourism development is important for further planning in tourism development.

### 2. Literature review

When reviewing research literature on community leaders and their efforts in building capacity for tourism development, it is necessary to understand the definition of community as it was used in research. Therefore, this section of the literature review offers definitions of community and discusses the needs for community development by illustrating the nature of problems in local communities. Hillery (1955) presented the general definitions of community: community consists of persons in social and cultural interaction within geographic area and having one or more additional common ties. Mattessich & Monsey (2004, p. 56) defined community as a "people who live within a geographically defined area and who have social and psychological ties with each other and with the place where they live". This definition was used in research study for definition of community as the main concept for assessing level of community capacity building in tourism development. Fellin (2001) also described local communities as social systems, including families, groups, and organizations. He noted that community is a social unit based on a common place, interest, identification, or some combination of these characteristics. Dalton et al. (2001) also states community is a meaningful entity that represents resources of empowerment. In addition, a community without leadership may not be equipped to mobilize resources or influence tourism planning. Local communities, like other organization, cannot proceed successfully without having dynamic leaders that are willing and able to take initiatives. Lack of capable community leaders is often

mentioned by local people as a barrier to community development (Aref & Ma'rof, 2008). Therefore the success of local community depends on the quality, creativity and commitment of its leadership in maintaining its daily affairs (Uphoff et al., 1998). Hence, an important issue to address in this literature review is the issue of community leadership because so much community development and tourism development depends on community leaders. Community leaders provide the basis for improving the quality of life (Kuponiyi, 2008).

A great deal of community development literature has been dedicated to community leaders and their power in local communities (Israel & Beaulieu, 1990). This research study involved community leaders within local communities, and those individuals were perceived as leaders of their communities and as people who are influential to the development of tourism in their communities. As such, a discussion and review of the community leadership literature is appropriate because it illustrates research that indicates community leaders very often do what is essential or vital for the survival of their communities. Community leaders supported both community development and tourism development simultaneously. They also realized that citizen participation in the process was imperative to successful community development (Marvill, 2006). Littrell & Hobbs (1989) discussed the importance of community leaders to a community in their discussion of the self-help approach to community development. According to Israel & Beaulieu (1990), without viable community leadership, it was virtually impossible for local communities to tackle problems facing them. In tourism studies, community leaders are often referred to a community knowledgeable, community influential, or people within a community that are involved in tourism decision making and problem solving, influential in tourism planning and development of tourism (Luloff et al., 1994). Hence defining the community leadership is an important approach to understanding community capacity building for tourism development. The importance of community capacity building in tourism development is evident, Community capacity building is a process aimed at strengthening the capacity of individuals and organizations to develop and sustain conditions that support all aspects of community life (Blackwell and Colmenar 2000). It is a necessary condition for the development of tourism industry (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009).

### **3. Research methodology**

The study was carried out in local communities in Shiraz, Iran the data for this study were collected from 175 community leaders. Community leaders was identified as a key factor in developing tourism in local communities (Moscardo, 2008). According to Eyler et al. (1999), Thompson et al. (2000), and Von et al. (1992) the leaders are able to speak for the community because of their knowledge and their roles in the community (Aref et al., 2009). The primary and major data collection is based on questionnaires. According to Riley (1996, p. 22) the majority of tourism research has relied on structured surveys and quantification". The items in the questionnaire for this survey were measured using Likert scale. The Likert scale is most commonly used in tourism marketing research (Aref et al., 2009; Grover & Vriens, 2006). Dong-Wan & William (2002) and Maddox (1985) recommended the use of a Likert scale in tourism research due to its high validity. Most of the questions for this section were obtained and modified from Public Health Agency of Canada (2007) and Maclellan (2007). Descriptive analysis, Pearson Correlation, and Spearman Correlation were used to interpret the data in this study. Descriptive statistics usually include means, standard deviations, and frequencies. Frequencies are commonly performed to count how many people answered each question with each particular response (Anderson, MacLellan-Wright, & Barber, 2007). Pearson correlation is a statistical technique to measure the strength of the association that exist between two quantitative variables (Ary et al., 1996). The Pearson correlation coefficient, used to measure the degree of linear relationship. The value of  $r$  is always between +1 and -1. However the variables of the study were normality distributed, but this Spearman rho correlation ( $r_s$ ) was also used in this study. The interpretation is the same as the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The researchers selected the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test, to determine the correlation between the leaders' characteristic and level of community capacity building in tourism development. This choice was made for the following reason: Whereas the Pearson correlation test is used to analyze interval or ratio data, Spearman's rank correlation test examines the ordinal data. Similar to other correlation tests, Spearman's rank correlation produces a coefficient somewhere between -1.00 and +1.00 (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 452). Mokhtari (2006), Azcel & Sounderpandian (2006), Creswell (2002), and Pallant (2005) also stated Spearman's rank correlation coefficient can be used to measure the degree of relationships between two variables when data are on an ordinal scale. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 17) was used to process and analyze the quantitative data. The pre-testing of instrument was carried out prior to the actual data collection to examine the appropriateness and reliability of the instrument. Hence 32 convenient samples were chosen to conduct the pre-testing. The results indicated the sufficiently and factor ability of statements. It also showed satisfactory internal consistency of the manifest items measuring level of community capacity building. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha was tested on each dimension of community capacity building. According to Garson (2009), the dimensions should have a Cronbach alpha of at least .70 to establish reliability of the constructs. Base on the reliability alpha values in this study the instruments has reliability with Cronbach's alpha values (between .0.74 and .93)

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The objective of this study was to determine relationship between community leaders' characteristics and their effort in community capacity building for tourism development. The questionnaire was used to obtain the primary data via a

survey of 175 community leaders of Shiraz. All respondents provided completed answers to every question. Table 1 shows details of descriptive statistics for 175 community leaders.. Out of the 175 community leaders, 5.14% were female and 94.86% were male, with an average age of 53.12 years. The youngest participant was 33 years and the eldest one was 72 years of age. Out of all the respondents, 26.36% (47 in numbers) state their highest level of education was a diploma and 42.86% (75 in numbers) holds the bachelor's degree. More than 60% (106 in number) of the respondents had engaged in tourism activities. Median income range of the respondents was 500USD. However, there were 12% who earn less than 350 USD, and 8% who earned more than 750 USD per month. Participants' age, educational level and income did not differ significantly by the communities. In terms of income from tourism activities, 42.03% state that tourism did not have any income for them; however 30.09% believed that tourism has a little contribution to their economic activities. Out of all respondents 85.1% had extra activities where majority of them (60.6 %) engaged in tourism activities. In terms of members family who were engaged in tourism activities, 62% said that their family members have tourism activities. And 37.7 % states that they don't have any member of their family engaged in tourism activities. This information provides an introduction for future discussion in tourism development activities. Other characteristics of the community leaders include; length of residence and also length of position held, which are summarized in Table 1.

Pearson coefficient correlation and Spearman rho coefficient correlation were used to identify the relationships between variables under studied. A Pearson product moment coefficient is utilized when variables correlated are expressed as ratio or interval data. As depicted in Table 2 there was a significant positive correlation between age and level community capacity building ( $r = .416$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). Furthermore, there was a significant positive correlation between length of residences and level of community capacity building ( $r = .402$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p = .001$ , two-tailed). This result also shows that there was a significant positive correlation between length of position held as leaders, and level of community capacity building ( $r = .462$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). Furthermore, there was a significant positive correlation between income and level of community capacity building ( $r = .601$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). The Spearman rho is used when the variables are expressed as a rank or ordinal data. Spearman rho coefficient correlation was used to determine the relationship between education, tourism income, tourism job and family engaged in tourism activities and the level of community capacity building. Because the variables were on an ordinal scale, Spearman rank correlation coefficients were computed between the variables (Aczel & Sounderpandian, 2006; Creswell, 2002; Gay & Airasian, 2000; Mokhtari, 2006). The results show that there were statistically significant in some of the relationships between these variables. There was a significant positive correlation between education and level of community capacity building ( $r_s = .401$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p < .000$ , two-tailed). There was also significant correlation between tourism income and level community capacity building ( $r_s = .644$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p < .000$ , two-tailed). The Table 2 also illustrates that there was a negative significant correlation between extra activity ( $r_s = -.214$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p < .004$ , two-tailed), a tourism job ( $r_s = .546$ ,  $N = 149$ ,  $p < .000$ , two-tailed) and family engaged in tourism activities ( $r_s = .356$ ,  $N = 175$ ,  $p < .000$ , two-tailed) with the level of community capacity building.

In Table 3 the result of data analysis were shown. The result of the  $r_s$  showed that there were correlations between the leaders' educational level, tourism income, extra activities, tourism job, family engaged in tourism with level of community capacity building. Although, community resources were identified as effective elements in building capacity for tourism development, the findings of this study in fact illustrate that community leader's characteristics can contribute to the community capacity building for tourism development.

Related to the findings of this study, Fisher (2005) stated that the characteristics of the leaders have a significant effect on the community economic development. Meanwhile Schultz (2004) also stated the importance of leaders characteristics in community development effort. One of the key leaders' characteristics of the respondents in this study was educational level. Vaughan (2003) states that people who have higher education have more activate in tourism development. The present study finding also shows that educational level has significant relationship with level of community capacity building. This finding is consistent with the findings by Andriotis & Vaughan (2003), were they found that the higher the level of education, the more likely residents to express their apprehension to tourism development in their communities. Age also was considered as a leaders' characteristic which has significant relationship with level of community capacity building. This is also Consistent with the findings by Chen (2000), Lawton (2005), where they found older residents also more likely to support tourism.

Another key leaders' characteristic of survey respondents were income. A leaders' annual income was also found to have significant relationship with the level of community capacity building. Chen (2001) also states that people with high income have more involved in tourism development. He stated that economic benefits from tourism have effect on the support of local people for development of tourism. Tourism income and family who are engaged in tourism activities also have positive significant relationship with the level of community capacity building for tourism development.

Length of residence was also has a significantly relation with the level of community capacity building. This finding is supported by Green et al. (1986) and Lawton (2005). Green et al. (1986) states that permanent residents may be more supportive of tourism development than seasonal residents (Green et al., 1986). Lawton (2005) also finds that the length of residence in the destination plays an important role in supporting for tourism development. Length of the leaders'

position as leaders was also identified as a having significant relationship with level of community capacity building. Those community leaders who have lived in the community with the longest position as leaders contribute more effort in community capacity building for tourism development. However, an extra activity has a negative significant relationship with level of community capacity building for tourism development. This finding implies that community leaders who may not work directly in the tourism industry may have less effort in community capacity building for tourism development. Martin et al (1998) conclude that those who do not receive real economic gain from the tourism growth have the tendency to give less support towards the development of tourism industry.

## 5. Conclusion

The study identified the relationships between the leaders' characteristics and level of community capacity building in tourism development. The results of this study showed that there were significant positive correlations between age, length of residence, length of position held income and community capacity building. A Spearman correlation also found there were significant positive correlations between education, income, extra activities, tourism jobs, and family engaged in tourism activities with level of community capacity building. Thus the importance and need for community leaders in building strong capacity communities cannot be ignored. In order to develop in current economic and social environment, communities need leaders who can help local group, businesses, and non-profit organizations to work together to address challenges and promote local strengths (Wituk et al., 2003). The findings of this study hopefully could be used to assist community leaders in the designing and implementation of tourism development strategies in local communities. It is expected that the findings of this study could also be utilized by the community leaders and tourism developers for their future follow-up studies and reassessment of community capacity building for tourism development in their communities.

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Table 1. Frequency Distributions of Respondents' Demographic Profiles (N=175)

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (N=175)	Male	166	94.9
	Female	9	5.1
Age(N=175)	30-40	18	10.3
	41-50	57	32.6
	51-60	63	36.0
	61-70	35	20.0
	71-80	2	1.1
Educational level(N=175)	Diploma	47	26.9
	Vocational education	28	16.0
	BA/BS	75	42.9
	MA/MS	18	10.3
	PhD	7	4.0
Length of residence (N=175)	1-15	46	26.3
	16-30	57	32.6
	31-45	20	11.4
	46-60	28	16.0
	61-75	24	13.7
Length of position held (N=175)	1-4	110	62.9
	5-8	34	19.4
	9-12	24	13.7
	13-16	7	4.0
Income(N=175)	> 450\$	83	47.4
	450-600\$	47	26.9
	600-750\$	31	17.7
	750-900\$	9	5.1
	900\$ <	5	2.9
Tourism Income (N=175)	None	74	42.3
	A little	54	30.9
	some	29	16.6
	A lot	12	6.9
	Almost all	5	2.9
	Missing	1	0.6
External activities(N=175)	Yes	149	85.1
	No	26	14.9
Activities related to tourism(N=175)	Yes	106	60.6
	No	43	24.6
	Missing	26	14.9
Family employment in tourism(N=175)	Yes	109	62.3
	No	66	37.7

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between Leader Characteristics and Level of Community Capacity Building (N=175)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	1				
2. Length of residence	.715**	1			
3. Length of position held	.727**	.803**	1		
4. Income	.281**	.109	.177*	1	
5. Community capacity building	.416**	.402**	.462**	.601**	1

\*\* $p < .05$ 

Table 3. Spearman Correlation between Leaders' Characteristics and Level of Community Capacity Building (N=175)

Variables	r	p
Educational level	.401**	.000
Tourism income	.644**	.000
Extra activities	-.214**	.004
Tourism job	.546**	.000
Family engaged in tourism	.356**	.000

\*\* $p < .05$