THE VALUE CHAIN APPROACH IN COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM : A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT IN THE JAUNSAR-BAWAR REGION OF UTTARAKHAND

S.K. Gupta

Professor (Tourism), Centre for Mountain Tourism and Hospitality Studies (CMTHS), HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal

Prakash Chandra Rout

Research Scholar, CMTHS, HNB Garhwal University

Abstract

Communities around the globe are often on the look for a developmental approach whether the communities are part of urban societies or rural societies. Many sector specific thematic areas through various developmental approaches have tasted both success and abortive results recently. The discussion through this qualitative discourse is an attempt to bring a similar kind of approach in the name of community based ecotourism promotion in the mountainous region of the state Uttarakhand. This piece of research has highlighted the community potential and a need approach through community participation in the development process. The important concept of value chain in the mountain region has also brought into the limelight.

Keywords: Community Based Ecotourism, Community Participation, Value Chain, Community Development, Sustainable Development

"Farming here is enough for the stomach, but not for buying clothes or for educating our children. To achieve this, you have to add other businesses like trade or tourism." - Farmer from the Annapurna region, Nepal (Mountain Agenda-2002).

Introduction

No matter how paradoxical it sounds, there is a truth in the claim that mountain areas are so rich and yet so poor. This claim comes from the fact that mountain tracts have abundance of diverse natural resources of regional and state significance, but these are not used completely (Madzevic & Toshevska, 2011). Mountains play a significant role for human survival but still considered as hinterlands in the context of development in most parts of the world (Mountain Agenda-2002).

At the global level from Agenda 21 (Rio-1992) Chapter 13 to World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD-2002),

Johannesburg many sector specific policies and laws have been formulated to deal with sectors such as forestry, watershed management, energy, infrastructure development and tourism. But most of these downstream policy initiatives as instruments for sustainable mountain development to support mountain livelihood and sustenance have not been very instrumental so far. Still the struggle for survival in mountains is on with little agriculture and complimentary income from small agro and forest based industries. Among all, the best alternative sustainable mountain development options 'tourism' promotion and development in these areas are in the mainstream development agendas of United Nations and other global developmental bodies. Even an attempt to develop tourism as a mainstream economic development options in these areas have been criticized lately due to the degradation of mountain ecosystems (Price, Jansky & Iastenia, 2004). In this condition where mountain resources are over utilized through wrong tourism practices, under the circumstances community based ecotourism promotion seems a viable sustainable developmental instrument in these areas. To take community based tourism development into the door steps of mountain communities may not only ensure long-term economic sustainability, but also help to maintain and protect local cultures, knowledge, leverage local assets, create opportunities through training and empowerment for the poorest, disadvantaged and marginalized groups and contribute to a more equitable distribution of economic benefits (Debarbieux, Oiry, Rudaz, Maselli, Kohler & Jurek , 2014).

Review of Literature

Mountains are important assets for the tourism industry. With their clean air and cool climates, breathtaking peaks, landscapes, abundant natural and cultural heritage, mountains are the region for getting away from the stressful, urban world. After coastal regions, mountains are second most popular as tourist destinations (Mieczkowski, 1995). This usage of mountain areas highlights the possibility of usage of the natural and anthropogenic tourist motif. The possibility of using mountain resources based on development of various types of tourism should be emphasized especially (Madzevic & Toshevska, 2011). Tourism is generally considered as a panacea from social, economic and environmental view point. Globally, the notion of increased tourism development leading to significant benefit for the poor, is lacking convincing empirical evidence. Such assumption and causal relation must also be evaluated against considerable evidence that tourism is causing much environmental, socio-economic and cultural damage (Christ et al., 2003; ECTWT, 2005; Leepreecha, 1997; Madely, 1999; Mastny, 2002). Furthermore, tourism development, as an economic activity is more relevant in similar socio-political scenario where the economy is struggling and other form of development has failed (Kabeer, 1994; McMichael, 2000). If persistent structural inequities are not addressed, relying on tourism (pro-poor or not) as a last resort 'rescue plan' is unlikely to reap significant and

long-term benefits for the already marginalized communities inhabit and environmentally vulnerable areas.New forms of tourism consist of smaller-scale and dispersed tourism developments located in and organized by communities. It will foster more meaningful interaction between tourists and local residents (Brohman, 1996). These forms of tourism depend on ownership patterns which are in favour of local, often family owned, relatively small-scale businesses rather than foreign-owned transnational and supported by external funding. By emphasizing local ownership and smaller scale, it is assumed that tourism will increase multiplier and has positive impact within the host-community and avoid problems of leakage of capital. It may seem obvious that where tourism is thriving, it absorbs many people who would otherwise be unemployed. However, these emerging employment opportunities do not necessarily contribute to community development. As dependency theorists would argue, employment in tourism is not apt to contribute to community development; it rather increases dependency on foreign markets (Harrison, 1992). Community development and bottom-up planning have become popular strategies for rural (tourism) development. The exploitation of the endogenous potential of regions is of Community development is broadly defined here as a process for empowerment and transformation. The focus on community development is to identify and resolve problems of a social, physical, or political nature that exist in a community in such a way

central importance in these concepts. Ideally, however, concepts for rural development should take internal factors, external influences and contextual elements into account. It has been suggested that the concept of 'networks' can be useful in this respect (Caalders, 1997).

Similarly, the pro-poor tourism discourse, like the sustainable development (SD) debate, is wrought with diverse views and competing values (Beder, 1996; Birkeland et al., 1997; Dale, 2001). Like sustainable development, it is a morally-charged concept valued for its unifying qualities, yet remains vulnerable to political hijacking (Irwin, 2001; Jacobs, 1999; Macbeth, 2005). It is therefore important to critically analyse the ideologies which underpin pro-poor tourism and distinguish between the diversity of views (and values) within the debate. In researching ecotourism initiatives in Belize, Duffy (2002) exposes ideological divisions within the environmental movement and illustrates how these varied and occasionally overlapping ethical positions shape policy, constrain individual agency and undermine efforts at sustainability. Pro-poor tourism, if it is to contribute meaningfully to progressive change needs to be deconstructed in a similar fashion.

that these conditions are changed or improved from the perspective of the community members. The goals of community development are self-help, community capacity building, and integration. (Reid& van Dreunen, 1996) The academic literature on

community development is considerable (Biddle and Biddle, 1965; Cary, 1970; Roberts, 1979). While there /are many definitions, there are common elements to members in the activities and processes of the community, the notion of self-help, and community control of the process and outcome. Perhaps the most overarching concept of community development is that which stresses process over product.

Despite these major investments for governments, agencies and residents, the benefits of tourism cannot always be easily demonstrated. In some places any benefits that can be described have been eroded by the negative impacts that can also accompany tourism. In many other situations, the benefits have been slow to emerge, modest at best and

Objectives of the Study

This piece of qualitative research had the following objectives:

1. To emphasize the importance of community based tourism in the mountainous region

2. To highlight the applicability of value chain and its potential benefits

3. To evaluation tourism as a viable operational mechanism to strengthen the local economy

Study Area

Jaunsar-Bawar, the wonderful scenic region is situated in the cis-Himalayas forming the northern half of the district Dehradun in the state of Uttarakhand. It lies between north latitude 30°31" and 31°3' 30" and East longitude 77°45' and 78°7'20". Tourism resources in the Jaunsar-Bawar region are quite abundant and can play an important role in the development of the tourism industry in

most of them. These elements can be synthesized generally to include a focus on change, indigenous problem identification, participation of all concerned community usually restricted to certain groups within the community (Moscardo, 2005). Ecotourism in particular has come under increasing criticism. As with many concepts in tourism, there is substantial debate over the definition of ecotourism. For the purposes of this discussion, ecotourism will be defined as 'nature-based, learning-oriented tourism that has the intention of being sustainable' (Weaver, 2003). Ecotourism developments are typically small-scale, located in or near natural environments, and offer more intensive nature-based activities (Weaver, 2003).

the region. Based on reviewing the status quo of ecotourism in the Jaunsar-Bawar and existing issues, this piece of research puts forward countermeasures and recommendations for development potential and promotion of community based ecotourism in the Jaunsar-Bawar regions.

Figure 1: Map of Jaunsar-Bawar
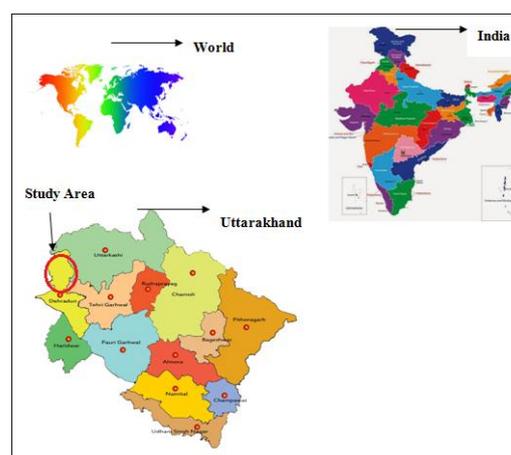
Sources: Google Image

In recent years state Governments intervention to promote tourism across the hilly state has opened up several economic avenues for the underdeveloped regions. The region of Jaunsar-Bawar with plethora of natural and cultural tourism resources among the indigenous inhabitants is a perfect place to promote community based ecotourism.

## Community Based Tourism in Jaunsar-Bawar Region

The region of Jaunsar-Bawar is historically famed because of its unique tradition and culture. The strategic location of the region and its potentiality in the forms of wild flora and fauna, historical heritages, adventurous landscapes and the undiluted culture making the place an appropriate place to project community based ecotourism. Destinations like Chakrata, Deoban, Mundali, Budher, Kanasar, Chirmiri top and Tiger fall can be promoted as destinations with high potentials of adventure activities like camping, trekking, rappelling, caving, nature trails etc. . Destinations such as Kalsi, Hanol and Lakhamandal can be promoted as community based tourism destination with cultural and heritage potential. Community based ecotourism can act as a panacea to strengthen the sagging local economy, where the major parts of the region are on the look for a suitable source of earning. Again the state Government has recently identified many villages in the region which have the potential of community based ecotourism promotion. Therefore strategy to promote community based ecotourism by adding the novel concept of value chain is an effort must to retrospect on.

Community Based Tourism and Sustainable Livelihood Options

Tourism development becomes increasingly vital to the communities around the globe, their time and place specific existences justify the development of tourism itself. According to Richard & Hall (2000) communities are the indispensable motivator for tourist to travel, to experience the way life exist in another community. Of course communities are source of tourists; tourists are drawn from urban or rural communities to experience the host communities. For last two decades tourism continues to be advocated as an industry to uplift socio-economic status of at-risk communities through real income, creates jobs, produces tax revenues, stimulates infrastructural improvement and beautification projects, and encourages community resource conservation and preservation. This in turn encourages inward investment and in-migration of business and people thereby strengthening community socio-economic status and enhance quality of life (Richard & Hall, 2000).

Figure 2: Benefits of Community Based Tourism
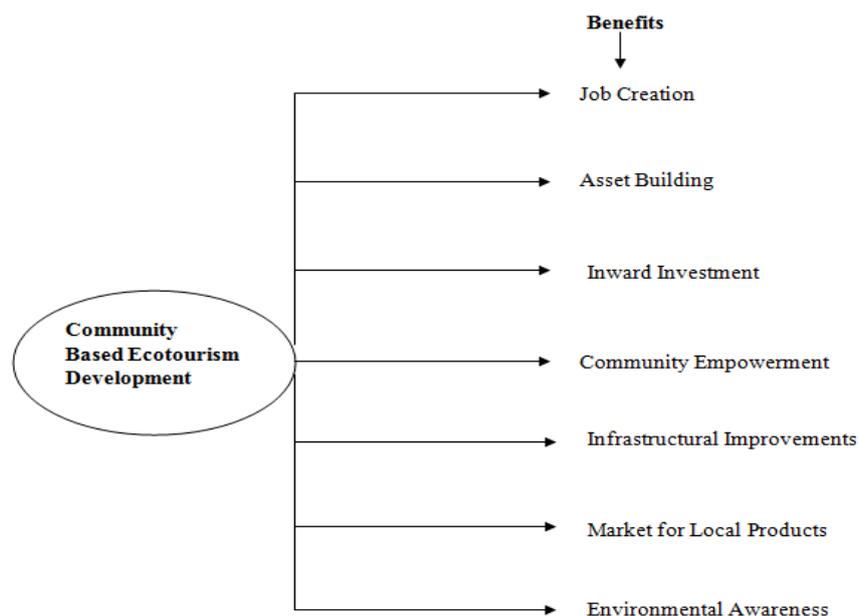
Source: authors

Scheyvens (1999) highlights various empowerment frameworks of ecotourism initiative on communities: (1) Economic empowerment (e.g. improved water system, houses made of more permanent materials), (2) Psychological empowerment (e.g. women, youth), (3) Social empowerment (e.g. to build schools or improved roads) and (4) Political empowerment (e.g. provide forum to raise questions) (Fennel, 2002). On the other hand ecotourism contribute to development of regional economies by increasing Gross Domestic Products (GDP) by shifting livelihood options from agriculture to tourism sector and release pre-existing pressure on natural resources and brings a notable change in employment structure (Li, 2006).

Mainstream community based ecotourism development in the mountainous region can bring strong plans and policies on economy, land use, conservation and infrastructure. According to Wearing & Neil (1999) ecotourism maximizes the benefits of tourism by providing additional revenue to the local business, increased market for local products, expertise the local labors in tourism related businesses and activities, protect and maintain the natural and cultural heritage of and increase awareness of indigenous culture among the local. Therefore community based ecotourism has a great potential to enhance local livelihood in mountain regions in a sustainable manner if the right approaches are laid down.

Stakeholders Participation

Stakeholder's inclusion in community based tourism development is essential to be the first building block of community development. The unique features of community development initiatives are the greater participation by the local people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living with dependence on their own initiative (Anglin, 2010). Many researchers suggest community involvement must be fair, efficient, provide knowledge, wisdom and stability throughout the entire development, planning and management process (Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987; Gunn, 1994).

Figure 3: Participants of a community based tourism working group
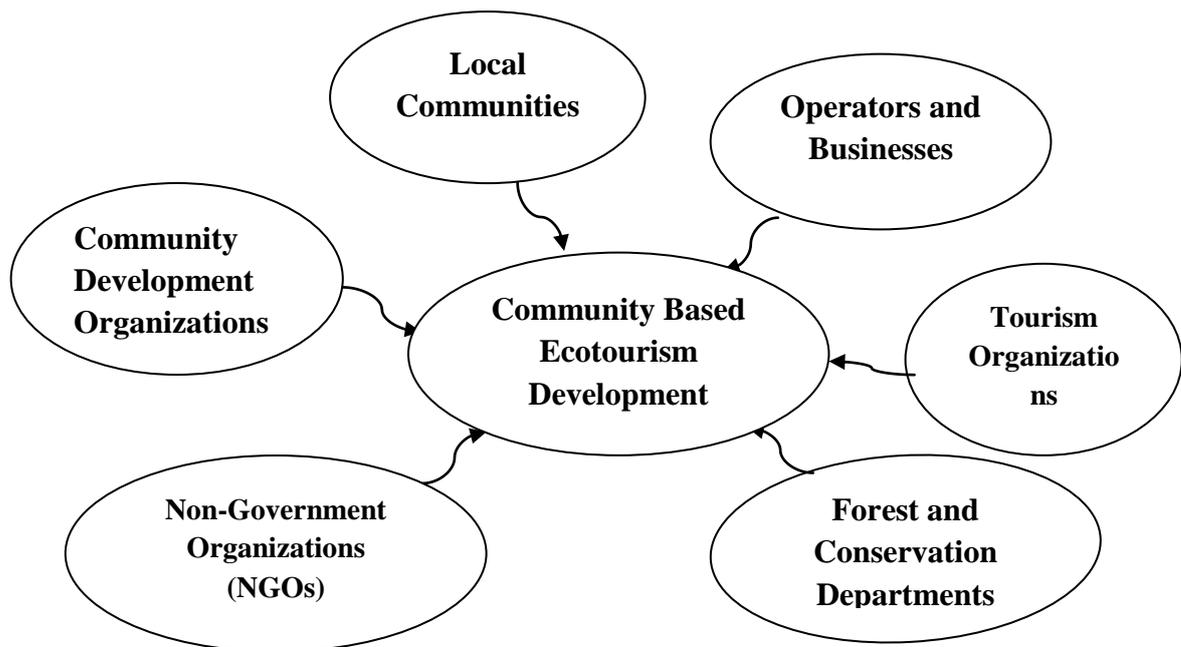
Source: Authors

Identification of key and potential stakeholders like local community members, tour operators, hotels, restaurants, local biodiversity and conservation organizations, community development organizations, Non Government Organizations NGOs, State and local Government tourism development organizations, local municipalities are vital in the case of community based ecotourism promotion. Each individual member of the community and organization will have different role to play while promoting community based tourism development among mountain communities. Once the key stakeholders of community based ecotourism are identified the working group must engage different stakeholders based on their level of inputs and potential role in future sustainable community based tourism development.

Tourism Value Chain and Community Development

The value chain approach through community based tourism development a neoliberal approach that brings different community actors through horizontal and vertical linkages into one market. Typically the community based ecotourism value chain is a strategic layout that acts as a catalyst to bring a permanent developmental solution to sagging economies. The initial building block of a community based ecotourism can be considered here as resources in the form of community culture and tradition, landscapes, flora and fauna, art and crafts, local heritages, indigenous agriculture and nature. Then the participation of key and potential stakeholders in the chain to expedite the process as community members, tour operators, hotel and restaurant owners, forest officials and local developmental organizations. The fact is resources and stakeholders will only be able to work in cohesion when there is a greater awareness among community about the benefits of community based ecotourism.

In the planning phase important considerations like resource mapping, various stakeholders role, product development and monitoring has to be done with utmost care. In the next phase integration of local resources with local knowledge has to be carried out. The most important phase of is the implementation phase where tourists are ready to explore the indigeno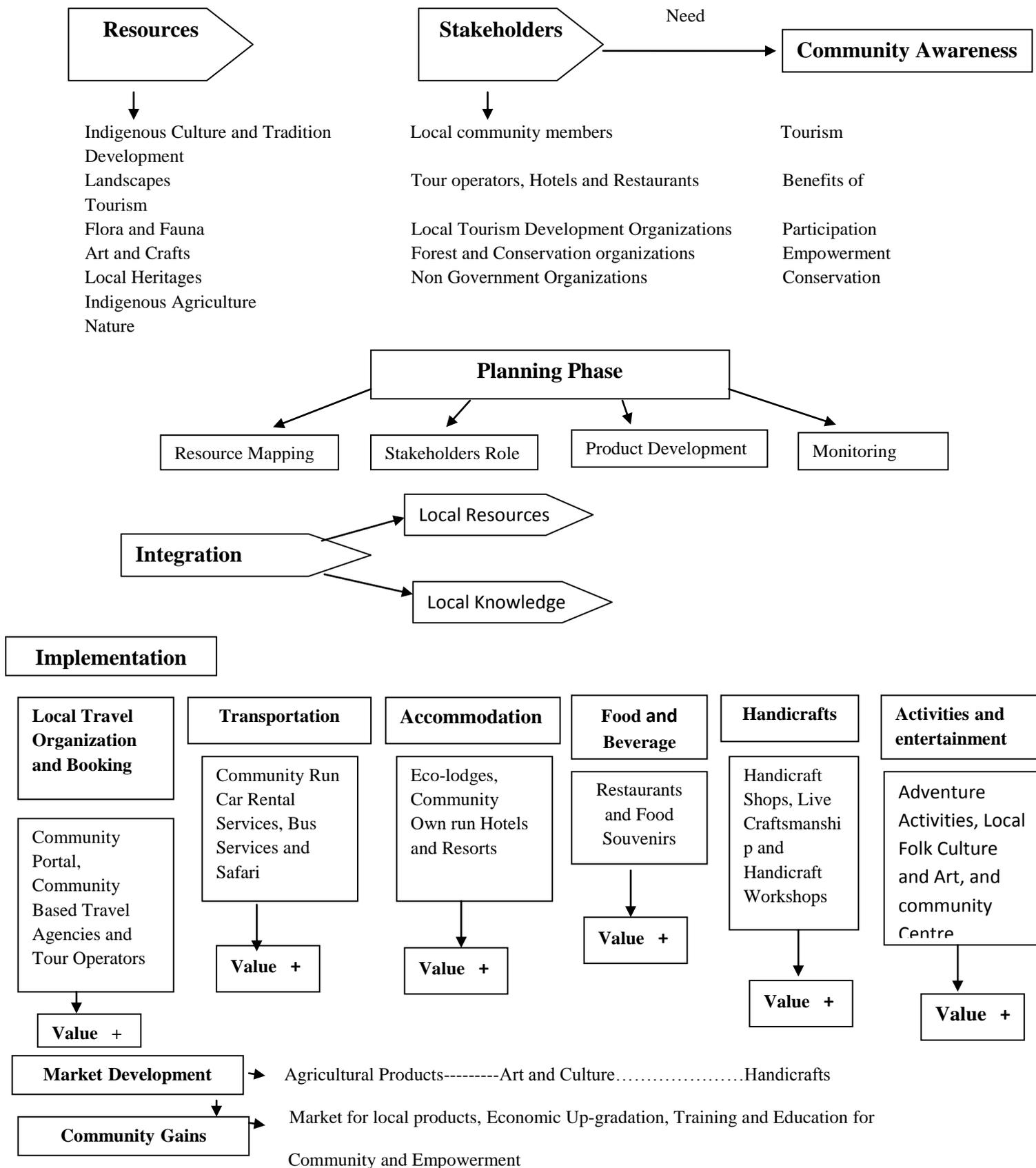us community. The euphoria among the community members are now boundless, they are set to welcome tourist by providing services like booking, transportation, accommodation and food and beverages services etc.

Now communities are in the core operational phase and receiving various value added benefits through tourism development. Now there is a greater demand of local products and the product gets long-term demand too. The communities those are engaged in the value chain now receiving a greater benefits like employment, training and education, empowerment, security and a overall community development by adding values to the local nature and culture.

Conclusion

The paradox of community development through value chain will remain a question to ponder at in the mountain areas undoubtedly. Because any kind of development among indigenous communities surrounded by fragile ecosystem can create severe environmental damage, therefore the term ecotourism has been stressed upon in this context. On the other side the value chain approach of community based ecotourism promotion is providing a market platform for both the potential buyers and sellers to engage in the business of tourism under certain must to follow policies and practices that have laid down previously. The discourse on the feasibility of community economic development for a longer period like how many jobs, how long and seasonality of the business will remain questions to answer at. Undoubtedly to bring the developmental approach through community based ecotourism to the rural hinterlands may enhance their existing livelihood in an extent than previous.

Figure 4: The Value Chain Model for Community Development

Resources	Stakeholders	Need → Community Awareness

Resources

Indigenous Culture and Tradition
Development
Landscapes
Tourism
Flora and Fauna
Art and Crafts
Local Heritages
Indigenous Agriculture
Nature

Stakeholders

Local community members
Tour operators, Hotels and Restaurants
Local Tourism Development Organizations
Forest and Conservation organizations
Non Government Organizations

Community Awareness

Tourism
Benefits of
Participation
Empowerment
Conservation

Planning Phase

- Resource Mapping
- Stakeholders Role
- Product Development
- Monitoring

Integration
→ Local Resources
→ Local Knowledge

Implementation

Local Travel Organization and Booking

Community Portal, Community Based Travel Agencies and Tour Operators

Value +

Transportation

Community Run Car Rental Services, Bus Services and Safari

Value +

Accommodation

Eco-lodges, Community Own run Hotels and Resorts

Value +

Food and Beverage

Restaurants and Food Souvenirs

Value +

Handicrafts

Handicraft Shops, Live Craftsmanship and Handicraft Workshops

Value +

Activities and entertainment

Adventure Activities, Local Folk Culture and Art, and community Centre

Value +

Market Development → Agricultural Products---------Art and Culture....................Handicrafts

Community Gains → Market for local products, Economic Up-gradation, Training and Education for Community and Empowerment

Source: authors

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