

Essentials of Risk Management in Community Tourism Development: Implication for Management of the Head, Heart and Hand in Rivers State

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Abstract

Risk management is a critical aspect of sustainable community tourism development, ensuring that tourism activities bring economic, social, and environmental benefits without compromising the well-being of the host community. This study outlines the critical aspects of risk management in community tourism development, providing a detailed exploration of strategies and practices. The process produces a comprehensive risk identification, encompassing environmental, health and safety risks. The risk assessment phase involves evaluating the potential impact and likelihood of these risks, with active engagement from local communities and stakeholders to validate findings and ensure diverse perspectives. Mitigation strategies are then developed, focusing on environmental protection through sustainable practices, economic resilience through diversification, cultural preservation, health and safety protocols, and policy advocacy to secure supportive regulatory environments. Continuous monitoring and periodic reviews of risk management plans are emphasized to adapt to new information and changing conditions. Emergency management planning was addressed through the development of emergency response and recovery plans, coupled with clear communication strategies for crisis situations. Sustainability is integrated into all aspects of tourism development, balancing economic, environmental, and social goals. Feedback mechanisms are established to incorporate insights from both tourists and community members. Engagement with community for capacity building are highlighted as crucial, with education and training programs, empowerment initiatives, and collaborative efforts ensuring local involvement in decision-making processes. By focusing on these comprehensive risk management strategies, communities can develop a resilient and sustainable tourism sector that maximizes benefits while minimizing potential risks. This holistic approach ensures that tourism development aligns with the long-term goals and values of the community, fostering a thriving and sustainable future.

Keywords: **Essentials, Risk, Management, Community, Tourism, Development, Head, Heart and Hand.**

Introduction

Tourism is a multidimensional and dynamic industry that span across the movement of people to destinations outside their usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes. Li et al (2017) Tourism can be broadly viewed as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, or other purposes. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors globally, significantly contributing to the economic development and cultural exchange among regions. This contributes to a significant development of the host community in infrastructural and human capacity development. Community tourism development represents a dynamic and increasingly popular approach to economic growth and cultural preservation. By leveraging local cultural, historical, and natural resources, communities can attract tourists, create jobs, and generate income. This requires effective management of the head, hearts and hand. However, the path to successful community tourism is fraught with challenges and potential pitfalls. To ensure that tourism development brings sustainable and equitable benefits, it is crucial to implement robust risk management strategies. Risk management in community tourism involves identifying, assessing, and prioritizing potential risks that could negatively impact the community, environment, or the tourist. These risks range from natural disasters, epidemic and pandemic, environmental degradation, medical emergencies and social displacement WHO (2024). Without careful planning and proactive measures, these risks can undermine the very assets that make a community attractive to tourists.

The essentials of risk management in community tourism development cannot be overlooked and can be achieved by engaging stakeholders, conducting comprehensive risk assessments, planning sustainably, building local capacities, and establishing effective governance structures, communities can navigate the complexities of tourism development. Risk management not only protects communities from potential adverse effects but also enhances their resilience and ability to thrive in a competitive tourism market. With thoughtful and inclusive approaches, community tourism can be a powerful tool for positive change, fostering economic development while preserving the unique cultural and natural heritage of local areas. As the industry continues to grow, a focus on risk management remains a positive force for community tourism development. The human factor is at the centre of this industry. The components of the human factor are: the head (cognitive), the heart (emotions) and the hand (skills).

Overview of Tourism

The term tourism varies source by source, person by person and there is no consensus concerning the definition of tourism, various institution defines “Tourism” differently. When it comes to explain it with the basic terms, Macintosh and Goeldner (1995) viewed it as a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2008) viewed tourism as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. One acceptable fact to the definition of tourism is that it involves movement of a person or group of persons to places outside their usual environment for varied purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities at the destination of travel., some of which imply tourism expenditure. Tourism is a significant global industry involving the travel and stay of individuals in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business, or other purposes. This sector plays a vital role in the global economy, contributing to economic growth, job creation, cultural exchange, and environmental conservation (Ruwan et al.,2020)

Types of Tourism

There are various types of tourism, each catering to different interests and motivations. Here’s an overview of the main types:

Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism where the traveller is motivated by a desire to learn about and engage with the history, traditions, practices and cultural attractions of a location. It is often concerned with experiencing other ways of life and engaging with people, but cultural tourism can also help to fund conservation efforts too. This could involve visiting monuments, museums, and religious sites, attending festivals, engaging with the arts or learning the local language. This type of tourism promotes understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

Sports and Events Tourism

Sports serve as a major attraction within the tourism industry and sports tourism is any form of travel where attending a sporting event is the primary motivation. This includes people who are going to spectate and people who are participating in the event. Sporting events can provide a major short-term boost to the economy.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism appeals to thrill-seekers looking for physical activities and challenges. It includes activities like hiking, climbing, bungee jumping, scuba diving, and safaris. Destinations often feature rugged landscapes, mountains, forests, and oceans.

Recreational Tourism or Leisure Travel

Leisure tourism is the most common type and involves traveling for relaxation and recreation. People engage in activities such as sightseeing, sunbathing, shopping, and dining. Popular destinations include beaches, resorts, and cultural landmarks. It allows tourists to escape their everyday lives and take part in different activities, enjoy new forms of entertainment, and generally focus on having fun. Through recreational tourism, people are often able to physically recharge, while boosting their mental health. The industry itself will frequently highlight opportunities for tourists to make lasting memories.

Business Tourism or Corporate Travel

This involves travelling for business purposes, it is a huge part of the tourism industry and is usually motivated by a desire to exchange knowledge and forge business relationships. Crucially, business tourists are still classed as working, but are doing so away from their usual place of work. Business tourism allows individuals to learn, network, share ideas and teach skills, while it can enable businesses to reach out to potential customers or business partners and gain access to new markets. Examples of activities that may occur during business travel include attending conferences, exhibitions, business dinners, meetings or workshops.

Domestic Tourism and Staycations

Domestic tourism is a form of tourism where a person travels to another location within the country they usually reside in. This may include staycations, weekend breaks and other similar trips. Domestic tourism contributes greatly to the tourism industry in many countries and often provides tourists with a cheaper alternative to traveling to a different country. Domestic trips can also be easier to organize, meaning convenience is a motivating factor. Many hotels actively target domestic tourists with their marketing efforts, because they can provide year-round business. Domestic tourism can be especially important in large countries, like the United States.

Rural Tourism

The basic definition of rural tourism is tourism that is focused on areas away from major settlements like towns and cities. However, rural tourism also typically extends beyond simply visiting rural locations and involves actively participating in a rural way of life. Examples

include camping trips, hiking trips, agritourism, which is typically focused on farms or ranches, and ecotourism, which is a form of responsible travel to natural areas. Rural tourism helps to alleviate some of the negative side effects of the tourism industry on urban areas and provides a boost to local economies. It can be a more sustainable form of tourism but may put pressure on communities too.

Medical Tourism or Health Tourism

Medical tourism or health tourism occurs when an individual travels to another country for the purpose of receiving medical treatment. It can have negative connotations, as it may put excessive pressure on a healthcare system, but some countries actively target people from other countries and advertise access to specific treatments. Historically, medical tourism primarily appealed to people living in countries with a poor healthcare system. However, in more recent times, several countries have found that offering cosmetic procedures or access to experimental treatments can attract many visitors and provide a major boost to the tourism industry

Agritourism – Farm and Ranch Stays

Agritourism combines agricultural activities with tourism and will typically involve a tourist staying on a farm, ranch, or similar property. It allows the tourist to experience day-to-day life in an agricultural setting, teaching them aspects of the business' operations, while providing entertainment. For the agricultural business, it serves as an additional revenue stream, allows them to enter the tourism industry and can help them to survive. Common examples of activities that tourists may participate in include feeding animals, riding horses, picking fruit and eating meals made on the farm, using produce from the farm.

Dark Tourism, Black Tourism or Grief Tourism

Dark tourism, or black tourism, is a sub-section of the tourism industry focused on places that are associated with tragedies. Sometimes described as grief tourism, it will include visits to battlefields, prison camps, sites associated with disaster, and other historical locations linked to death and suffering. Dark tourism does not always have negative connotations and can be educational, with respectful intentions. Examples of this include trips to the Auschwitz concentration camp, the Killing Fields in Cambodia, the World Trade Center in New York City, or the area surrounding the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

Culinary Tourism or Food and Drink Tourism

Culinary tourism, also known as food tourism or gastronomy tourism, involves traveling to explore and experience the food and beverage traditions of a destination. This type of tourism is centered around culinary experiences, offering travellers the opportunity to taste and learn about local cuisines, cooking techniques, and food cultures. Culinary tourism is a growing segment of the tourism industry, driven by an increasing interest in authentic and immersive food experiences.

Religious Tourism or Spiritual Travel

As the name suggests, religious tourism is tourism for reasons related to religion and spirituality, such as pilgrimage or educational visits to sacred locations. It can form a crucial part of some religions and popular religious trips are often a key contributor to the local economy. Religious tourism may also help people from different cultures to share ideas, exchange cultural practices and understand one another. Some of the biggest examples of religious tourism include Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to Mecca by Muslims, or visits to the Vatican City by Christians. Another example would be a trip to a Buddhist temple or retreat. Often, important religious trips are facilitated by businesses in the tourism industry offering specific services.

Components of Tourism

Tourism comprises of various interconnected components that together create the overall tourism experience. Colorwhistle (2024) and These components can be categorized into five main areas:

1. Attractions

Attractions are the primary motivators for tourists to visit a destination. They can be natural, cultural, historical, or man-made. These include natural attractions such as beaches, mountains, forests and wildlife reserves, cultural Attractions include: Museums, art galleries, heritage sites, festivals, and cultural events, Historical and man made attractions such as ancient ruins, historical landmarks, parks, shopping, malls and entertainment complex.

2. Accommodation

Accommodation provides tourists with a place to stay during their trip these include: Hotels, Vacation rentals and campgrounds

3. Transportation

Transportation is crucial for moving tourists from their place of origin to their destination and within the destination itself. Modes of transportation include: Air, Land and water transport.

4. Amenities

Amenities are the additional services and facilities that enhance the tourist experience. These include: Food and Beverage, Retail Services, Banking Services and internet services

5. Tourist Services

Tourist services encompass a range of support services designed to assist tourists before, during, and after their travels. These include: Travel Agencies, tour Operators, Guided Tours, Information Centres, and Insurance Services

Occupational Health and Safety Risk in Community Tourism Development

Some Occupational Health and Safety Risk that impact the development of tourism within the community

1. Natural Disasters

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and volcanic eruptions can pose severe risks to tourists. Research by Faulkner (2001) highlighted the importance of disaster preparedness and response plans tailored to the specific risks of each destination. Early warning systems, evacuation plans, and education for both tourists and local communities are critical components of managing these risks. Natural disasters pose significant risks to tourism, impacting destinations through physical damage, economic losses, and long-term reputational harm. The following review explores the existing literature on the relationship between natural disasters and tourism, highlighting key themes, challenges, and strategies for mitigation and recovery.

2. Health Risks

Health risks in tourism include outbreaks of infectious diseases, food and waterborne illnesses, and inadequate medical facilities. Studies by FAO & WHO (2019) emphasize the need for robust health and safety protocols, including regular health inspections of food establishments, availability of clean drinking water, and access to quality medical care. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of hygiene measures, vaccination programs, and the capacity for rapid response to health crises (Sigala, 2020). Example is outbreak of infectious diseases, tourists can both spread and contract infectious diseases due to increased mobility and interaction with diverse populations. Diseases such as influenza, and more recently, COVID-19, have shown how tourism can facilitate the rapid spread of pathogens. According to Wilder-Smith and Freedman (2020), the international travel network plays a crucial role in the global transmission of infectious diseases. The outbreak of COVID-19 highlighted the

vulnerabilities in global health security and the need for stringent health protocols in the tourism sector (Sigala, 2020).

3. Food and Waterborne Illnesses

Food and waterborne illnesses are common health risks for tourists, often arising from the consumption of contaminated food or water. Studies by Steffen et al. (2015) indicate that travellers to developing countries are particularly at risk due to lower standards of food safety and sanitation. Common illnesses include traveller's diarrhea, hepatitis A, Malaria and typhoid fever.

Environmental Risks and Management

Research indicates that community tourism can lead to significant environmental impacts if not properly managed. According to Buckley (2012), tourism development often results in habitat destruction, pollution, and resource depletion. Effective environmental risk management strategies include implementing sustainable practices, such as eco-friendly infrastructure, waste management systems, and conservation programs (Yuzvovich, et al (2024). The use of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) is also emphasized to predict and mitigate negative impacts before project implementation (Glasson & Therivel, 2019).

4. Healthcare Infrastructure and Services

The availability and quality of healthcare services are critical for managing health risks in tourism. Inadequate healthcare infrastructure can lead to poor outcomes for tourists requiring medical attention. Research by McKercher and Wong (2004) showed that destinations with well-developed healthcare systems are better equipped to handle health emergencies and provide care for tourists.

5. Psychosocial Health Risks

Travel can also pose psychosocial health risks, including stress, anxiety, and culture shock. Research by Gopalkrishnan (2018) suggested that unfamiliar environments, language barriers, and cultural differences can contribute to mental health issues among tourists. Providing mental health support and resources can help mitigate these risks. Also, concerns about personal safety and security can also affect tourists' mental well-being. Studies by Neumayer, (2004) indicate that crime, terrorism, and political instability are significant stressors for tourists.

6. Crisis Management and Contingency Planning

Crisis management and contingency planning are vital components of risk management in community tourism. Faulkner (2001) highlighted the need for comprehensive crisis management plans that address potential natural disasters, health pandemics, and other

emergencies. Effective contingency planning involves clear procedures for emergency response, recovery, and communication (Alshamsi, 2017)

Risk management

Risk management in community tourism development underscores the importance of a holistic and integrated approach. By addressing environmental, social, economic, and cultural risks through sustainable practices, stakeholder engagement, effective governance, capacity building, and continuous monitoring, communities can achieve resilient and sustainable tourism development. This comprehensive approach ensures that tourism not only brings economic benefits but also preserves the unique cultural and natural heritage of local communities. Below is the risk management process:

1. Risk Identification

Identifying potential risks is the first step in managing them. This includes understanding the various types of risks that can affect community tourism.

- **Disaster Risks:** Weather events, natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, hurricanes).
- **Accident & Emergency Management** – Road Traffic / Water Transport Accident, Early Emergency Response
- **Food & Waterborne illness** – Epidemics
- **Environmental Risk** – Air/Soil/Water Pollution
- **Medical Services** – inadequate Medical care facilities
- **Health Risks:** Disease outbreaks, food and water safety issues.
- **Safety Risks:** Crime, accidents, infrastructure failures.
- **Psychosocial Health Risk** – Stress, Mental Health
- **Social Risks:** Cultural insensitivity, social unrest.

2. Risk Assessment

After identifying potential risks, assessing their likelihood and potential impact is essential. This involves analyzing the probability of occurrence and the severity of consequences.

- **Likelihood Assessment:** Estimating the probability of each risk occurring.
- **Impact Assessment:** Evaluating the potential consequences on the community, environment, and tourism experience.
- **Prioritization:** Ranking risks based on their severity and likelihood to focus on the most critical ones.

3. Risk Mitigation and Management Strategies

Developing and implementing strategies to mitigate identified risks is crucial. These strategies can include prevention, reduction, and contingency planning.

- **Prevention:** Implementing measures to prevent risks from occurring (e.g., building codes, health regulations).
- **Reduction:** Taking steps to minimize the impact of risks that cannot be completely prevented (e.g., training staff, improving infrastructure).
- **Contingency Planning:** Preparing response plans for when risks materialize (e.g., evacuation plans, emergency response teams).

4. Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging all relevant stakeholders in the risk management process is vital for community tourism development. This includes local residents, tourism operators, government authorities, and tourists.

- **Community Involvement:** Ensuring local communities are active participants in risk management planning and decision-making.
- **Collaboration:** Working with various stakeholders to share information, resources, and responsibilities.
- **Communication:** Maintaining open and transparent communication channels to keep

5. Monitoring and Review

Continuous monitoring and regular review of risk management practices are essential to ensure their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

- **Monitoring:** Keeping track of risk indicators and the effectiveness of mitigation measures.
- **Reviewing:** Regularly assessing and updating risk management plans to address new and evolving risks.
- **Feedback Loop:** Incorporating feedback from stakeholders to improve risk management strategies.

6. Training and Capacity Building

Educating and training stakeholders on risk management is crucial for building capacity and resilience within the community.

- **Education Programs:** Implementing training programs for community members and tourism operators on risk awareness and management.

- **Capacity Building:** Strengthening local capacities to manage and respond to risks through skills development and resource allocation.
- **Simulation Exercises:** Conducting drills and simulations to prepare for potential risk scenarios.

7. Sustainability Integration

Incorporating sustainability principles into risk management ensures that tourism development does not compromise the long-term well-being of the community and environment.

- **Sustainable Practices:** Promoting eco-friendly and culturally sensitive tourism practices.
- **Long-term Planning:** Ensuring risk management strategies are aligned with sustainable tourism development goals.
- **Resilience Building:** Enhancing the community's ability to adapt to and recover from risks and challenges. By focusing on these essentials, communities can develop robust risk management strategies that protect their interests, promote sustainable tourism, and enhance the overall tourist experience.

Benefits of Risk management in tourism development

Gatchalian, et al (2005) posited that tourism has the potential to bring profound benefits to the federal government, local authorities, and the private sector through generation of revenue, financial returns on investment, and tax revenue. They suggest that ‘Tourism, as an instrument that fosters open and friendly communication between nations and cultures, creates a global language of peace that can help people understand one another and accept their differences. The implementation of a robust risk management system will foster the sustenance of this robust benefits. The implementation of the risk management system will:

- a. Enhanced Community Safety and Security for both the tourist and the local community
- b. Increased Community Involvement and Empowerment by fostering greater community engagement
- c. Encourage sustainable Tourism Development by addressing environmental, social, and economic risks, risk management supports sustainable tourism practices.
- d. Enhance community reputation and Trust
- e. Identifying and mitigating risks can lead to significant cost savings by preventing potential losses and reducing insurance premiums.
- f. Risk management ensures that tourism activities comply with local, national, and international regulations.

- g. Communities with strong risk management practices are more resilient and adaptable to changes and unexpected events.
- h. Risk management contributes to the long-term viability of community tourism projects by ensuring they are sustainable and resilient
- i. Effective risk management improves the overall visitor experience by ensuring a safe, enjoyable, and well-managed environment.
- j. Engaging in risk management fosters stronger partnerships between the community, tourism operators, governmental bodies, and other stakeholders.

Implications for the Management of the Hand, Heart and Hand

The Head, Heart, and Hand framework offers a holistic approach to managing tourism risks by integrating knowledge, values, and actions (Mahmud, 2017)

a) Head (Knowledge and Understanding)

The Head represents cognitive aspects like knowledge, awareness, and decision-making. In tourism development, this means Knowledge-Based Risk Management. It involves educating communities and stakeholders about the opportunities and risks of tourism, focusing on hospitality, sustainable practices, and environmental conservation (Khan, et al, 2021). In Rivers State, understanding both the economic potential and environmental risks of tourism is crucial. Researching local tourism impacts and developing policies on eco-tourism, infrastructure, and cultural heritage preservation can ensure informed decisions and mitigate negative consequences (UNWTO, 2020).

b) Heart (Emotions and Values)

The Heart addresses the emotional and cultural aspects of tourism. For sustainable development, local communities must be emotionally invested in tourism, ensuring their values and cultural identities are respected (UNWTO, 2020). In Rivers State, safeguarding cultural heritage is essential to prevent exploitation and cultural erosion. Managing tourists' expectations helps maintain authenticity and avoid the "touristification" of local customs (Cohen, et al, 2019).

c) Hand (Action and Implementation)

The Hand involves practical actions to manage risks. Key actions include promoting eco-tourism, waste management, and responsible consumption (Eagles, et al, 2002). In Rivers State, effective crisis management plans for disasters or security threats, along with training for local communities in hospitality and emergency response, are essential to ensure resilience (IJAR, 2024). Empowering local communities to manage tourism enhances long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

Risk management is a fundamental component of successful community tourism development. By systematically identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks, communities can safeguard their residents, tourists, and the environment. The benefits of implementing robust risk management strategies are multifaceted and far-reaching. It guarantees safety and security of both tourists and the local community, it fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment as residents become active participants in tourism development, ensuring that their needs and values are respected and integrated into the project. This inclusive approach leads to sustainable tourism practices that protect the environment, promote economic stability, and preserve cultural heritage. Integrating comprehensive risk management into community tourism development is not just about preventing negative outcomes; it is about creating a robust framework that supports sustainable growth, community empowerment, and enriched tourist experiences. By prioritizing risk management, communities can build a resilient, prosperous, and harmonious tourism sector that benefits everyone involved.

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