

ECOLOGDGES AS A COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: THE CASE OF CHAOUEN IN MOROCCO

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Abstract: This paper consists of an empirical study investigating to what extent can ecolodges serve as community-based tourism development strategy. It is conducted in a cultural and natural tourism destination north of Morocco-Chefchaouen or shortly known as Chaouen-. A considerable amount of literature was reviewed in order to form the theoretical framework of this study consisting mainly of community-based tourism (CBT), local participation, tourism benefits, and tourism development. Fifteen (15) semi-structured interviews were conducted mainly with ecolodges' owner/managers, civil society activists who contribute to the tourism sector, and government officials who directly represent public agencies in charge of tourism in the region. Data collection method were chosen to be semi-structured interviews for the sake of maximum data quality and more vivid interaction with interviewees (Harris & Brown, 2010). The collected data set was analysed using quantitative content analysis, following the categories of themes and concepts extracted from the theoretical framework. The main findings of the paper show that indeed ecolodges generate a considerable benefit to local community, especially, on the socioeconomic level, but on the other hand, there is a lack environmental awareness and an unclear stakeholders structure.

Keywords: Community-based tourism; Ecolodges; Sustainable development; Morocco.

ECOLOGDGES COMO ESTRATÉGIA DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DO TURISMO DE BASE COMUNITÁRIA: O CASO DE CHAOUEN NO MARROCOS

Resumo: Este artigo consiste em um estudo empírico que investiga até que ponto os *ecolodges* podem servir como estratégia de desenvolvimento do turismo de base comunitária. A revisão de literatura baseou-se nos temas de turismo comunitário (TCC), participação local, benefícios turísticos e desenvolvimento do turismo. A pesquisa empírica foi conduzida em um destino turístico cultural e natural ao norte de Marrocos-Chefchaouen, ou simplesmente Chaouen. Foram coletadas (15) entrevistas semiestruturadas com *stakeholders* chave do local (proprietários / gerentes de *ecolodges*, ativistas da sociedade civil do setor de turismo e funcionários do governo de agências públicas responsáveis pelo turismo na região). Estes dados foram analisados pela análise de conteúdo quantitativa, seguindo as categorias de temas e conceitos extraídos do quadro teórico. Conclui-se que, de fato, os *ecolodges* geram um benefício considerável para a comunidade local, especialmente, no nível socioeconômico, mas, por outro lado, há uma falta de consciência ambiental e uma estrutura de partes interessadas pouco clara.

Palavras-chave: Turismo de base comunitária; Ecolodges; Desenvolvimento sustentável; Marrocos.

ECOLOGDGES COMO ESTRATEGIA DE DESARROLLO DEL TURÍSTICO COMUNITARIO: EL CASO DE CHAOUEN EN MARRUECOS

Resumen: Este artículo consiste en un estudio empírico que investiga hasta qué punto los *ecolodges* pueden servir como estrategia de desarrollo del turismo de base comunitaria. La revisión de literatura se basó en los temas de turismo comunitario (TCC), participación local, beneficios turísticos y desarrollo del turismo. La investigación empírica fue conducida en un destino turístico cultural y natural al norte de Marruecos-Chefchaouen, o simplemente Chaouen. Se recolectar (15) entrevistas semiestruturadas con *stakeholders* clave del local (propietarios / gerentes de *ecolodges*, activistas de la sociedad civil del sector turístico y funcionarios del gobierno de agencias públicas responsables del turismo en la región). Estos datos fueron analizados por el análisis de contenido cuantitativo, siguiendo las categorías de temas y conceptos extraídos del cuadro teórico. Se concluye que, de hecho, los *ecolodges* generan un beneficio considerable para la comunidad local, especialmente, en el nivel socioeconómico, pero, por otro lado, hay una falta de conciencia ambiental y una estructura de partes interesadas poco clara.

Palabras clave: Turismo comunitario; Ecolodges; Desarrollo sostenible; Marruecos.



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1 INTRODUCTION

In the last years, tourists' behaviour took a slight turn from traditional forms of tourism to new more sustainable forms. This behaviour change might be due to the fact that tourists became more attracted by the local history, ethics and culture of the particular destination. Consequently, cultural heritage is set to play an essential role in maximising the potential of any given destination. This process, though, might be dependent on the integration of local communities in the planning and management process of a destination. In fact, it is proven that any destination development should include two key elements: the level of involvement of the local community and the level of control it has over tourism; second, the number and type of tourists. Thus, these two key elements, if correctly applied, make of tourism a poverty-fighting tool as well.

The adaptation of this local community empowerment leads eventually to restructuring the tourism sector by redistributing roles of each actor. It also cuts the traditional mass tourism structure and promotes local initiatives integrating natural attractions and recreational activities at the local level. Moreover, it establishes a change in both the local economic structure and their traditional production activities. The local community initiatives can also, open up opportunities for new projects, consisting of the exploitation of natural, social and cultural resources, are taken in parallel at the local level and adding a strong effect to the local economic structure based mainly on agriculture and the environment, breeding. To make out this initiative a real tourism product, it is imperative, then, to plan an appropriate regional tourism policy based on three activities (Bringas & Israel, 2004): first, training local populations and raising awareness; second, infrastructure and equipment; and third, promotion.

The main objective of this paper is to analyse how can community-based tourism be a tourism development strategy of local populations and evaluates the status of ecotourism in Chaouen Morocco as part of the community participation in the tourism development process.

Starting with a literature review of the existing references related to the concept of community-based tourism and in general the literature highlighting the interaction between tourists and local communities later, findings of a study conducted in Chaouen a known natural and cultural tourism

destination north of Morocco. Ecotourism owner and managers in this area were interviewed to explore their perceptions of tourism activities in their area and to what extent they affect their life style and especially the socioeconomic aspect.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Community based tourism (CBT) adoption have been raised as a considerably effective alternative to traditional tourism in the last decades by tourism planners and managers. CBT was basically perceived as an alternative form of tourism to overcome the disadvantages of traditional or mass tourism, such as repatriation of profits from developing economies by multinational companies and the negative impact on destinations (Scheyvens, 1999).

It is mainly established on sustainable development of local communities and alternative initiatives aiming at integration and empowerment ideas. The core aspect of this alternative approach is fixed in small or medium sized ventures that may potentially create job opportunities and improve socioeconomic aspects of local communities in the areas where other development strategies may not be appropriate (Jones & EplerWood, 2008) quoted in Dangi & Jamal, 2016). In addition, CBT is supposed to lead to heritage conservation (cultural/environmental) and to a reasonable distribution of economic benefits between different groups of the local communities.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been defined by many scholars as a suitable development model for maximising the socio-economic benefits of tourism and minimising negative environmental impacts (Moscardo, 2008; Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernandez-Ramírez, 2010 cited in Tolkach & King, 2015). However, other recent approaches considered that a networked, collaborative approach to CBT offers better prospects for delivering effective and sustainable tourism development (APEC Tourism Working Group and STCRC, 2010; Stronza, 2008 cited in Tolkach & King, 2015). Meanwhile, others have critically perceived such approaches for their lack of profitability, inadequate contributions to community development and weak marketing and distribution (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Blackstock, 2005; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

Other scholars suggest that CBT could be used to refer to "alternative forms of tourism development aiming to empowering local communities and

achieving maximum local benefit'. They adopted the view of various authors emphasising on benefits to local communities, promoting active community participation in tourism planning, enhancing host-guest interactions, and preserving natural and cultural heritage within CBT planning (APEC Tourism Working Group and STCRC, 2010; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Johnson, 2010; Moscardo, 2008; Rocharungsat, 2008; Trejos & Chiang, 2009; Zapata, Hall, Lindo, & Vanderschaeghe, 2011 cited in Tolkach & King (2015).

CBT major guidelines cross with the perception of many authors arguing that adequate tourism development should rely on community participation and stakeholders cooperation (Dodds, 2007; Moscardo, 2008; Murphy, 1985; Murphy & Murphy, 2004; Reed, 1997; Timothy, 1999; Yang, Ryan, & Zhang, 2013 quoted in Tolkach & King, 2015). They add that most basic CBT definitions categorise it as part of social economy whose major aspects are public-sector not-for-profit, market-based social organizations, and civil-society organizations, including co-operatives and worker associations (Johnson, 2010 cited in Tolkach & King, 2015).

In parallel, CBT has been highly criticised by the research community for failing to achieve the intended benefits to communities leading to question the worthiness of the contributor's assets. The main other weak points of CBT found in the literature can be summed up as follows: 1) access to market, 2) commercial viability, 3) the presence of a policy framework and 4) implementation challenges (Ashley & Maxwell, 2001). The most frequent pointed out weaknesses here are the market access and commercial viability, proved in cases where CBT projects that offer accommodation as they require a higher level of investment and in most cases, achieve very low occupancy.

Tosun, (2000) introduced, in this regard, three main limitations levels to the local community participation in tourism development process (TDP). Operational limitations, structural limitations, and cultural limitation. Centralisation of public administrations, lack of coordination between tourism professionals and lack of tourism information/collected data were the operational limitations. On the structural level, the main cited limitations were attitude of professionals which may be affected by their political orientations, lack of local qualified personnel, and elite domination of business opportunities and initiatives. Finally, limited capacity of poor people whose greatest

challenge is mere survival consuming all their time and energy. Also, apathy and low awareness level of caused by previous long years of exclusion which made them lose interest in any participation.

Moreover, a large part of literature criticises current CBT models for their over-reliance on western views and development agencies which tend to put weak consideration to local perspectives and knowledge (Le et al., 2012 cited in Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016). In the same sense, Mtapuri & Giampiccoli (2016) states that current CBT planning approaches still stuck with the western notions of tourism and tourist making their appreciation and understanding of community perspective inappropriate.

Authors like Sin & Minca, (2014), Swanepoel & De Beer (2006, cited in Tolkach & King (2015), adds that the term 'Community' is being frequently idealized; practically, communities are incomplete, divided and changeable. However, in literature, it is minimized to geographical localities that enjoy substantial autonomy or to groups that exhibit shared interests and needs a sense of common identity (Brent, 2004; Shaw, 2008 quoted in Tolkach & King, 2015). Blackstock (2005) goes quite further in perceiving CBT; he stresses the effect of neo-liberal strategies preventing promoting empowerment and social justice. CBT literature deals more with the sustainability of tourism industry while community development aims at social justice and empowerment.

These conceptual constraints could be dealt with through applying a set partnership models in CBT. These partnerships could be established between host communities and authorities (governments) on the one hand, and between communities and private sector on the other (Naguran, 1999); (Roe et al. 2001 cited in Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016). CBT Networks represent another form of partnerships and collaborations from within CBT models. They embody an opportunity for rural development through supporting local fragile individual businesses (Tolkach & King, 2015).

Also, CBT networks may potentially support socioeconomic development in less developed countries. Yet, effective CBT Networks structures and functions in less developed countries has not been deeply elaborated (Britton, 1983; Gibson, 2010; Hollinshead, 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 2008 cited in Tolkach & King, 2015). Earlier, terms like 'Network', 'Networking', and 'Clusters' have been used to refer to

socially constructed intangible linkages and collaborations between entities, such as individuals, NGOs and businesses (Lynch & Morrison, 2007; Scott et al., 2008; Svensson, Nordin, & Flagestad, 2005; Todeva, 2006) quoted in Tolkach & King, (2015).

Nevertheless, unsuccessful CBT practices have been linked with lack of private sector partnerships (Mitchell and Ashly, 2010). Development agencies extensively put CBT to the test when used it as a tool for community development in areas where no other form of economic development could work (Lynch & Morrison, 2007; Scott et al., 2008; Svensson, Nordin, & Flagestad, 2005; Todeva, 2006 quoted Tolkach & King, 2015). Mtapuri & Giampiccoli (2016) suggests that CBT should not be perceived from a linear evolutionary angle, rather, its evolution is driven by each models specific objectives. however, monitoring the linear evolution of CBT development might be challenging due to the variety of practices and examples.

Even though CBT is considered as a fully community development process, rarely where these projects are initiated independently by communities; it usually requires external support especially concerning marketing and assistance (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016). Obviously, the initiative of starting a CBT project is more likely to be taken externally than locally; private sector NGOs and government agencies have more potential to start such projects (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016; Scheyvens, 2002).

However, one of the key elements to consider for the maximum CBT success is the human resources that each destination possesses. assessing and understanding these resources is the measuring axis of CBT projects success (Asker et al. 2010 cited in Giampiccoli, 2014). Mtapuri & Giampiccoli (2016) urge to distinguish between CBT as tourism practice managed and controlled by the community, and CBET (Community based ecotourism) which designates an alternative to mass tourism.

Consequently, there might be no perfect or ideal form of local community participation in tourism development process. But a large amount of literature in respect to this issue stresses on the imperative involvement of local communities in tourism planning and development. There are many ways in which the local community can be involved in tourism planning and development.

This approach is not, surely, a question of mere literature, rather it depends on local situations,

including the other stakeholders and the limitations that locals have to deal with. While in CBT projects, the local participation is supposed to be high, this is not always the case. Tourism is perceived as a development model given the fact that it is a non economic activity with all the attributes to create transform and build a process of capital accumulation (Dachary, 2015).

In a study Croes & Rivera (2015) found that tourism has double effect on human development; it directly provides resources to sustain human development on the one hand, and indirectly through economic growth on the other. Nevertheless, even though tourism development can be a direct source of positive benefits in given circumstances, it may also provoke negative aspects (Croes & Rivera, 2015).

3 METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with governmental officials, civil society associations and different stakeholders contributing to tourism activities in the city. The interviews were chosen to be semi-structured for the sake of maximum data quality and more vivid interaction with interviewees (Harris & Brown, 2010). In total 15 interviews were conducted across Chaouen, with HCEFLCD (Haut Commissaire aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Désertification, the governmental agency responsible for protected areas) and tourism ministry local representative in the province, in addition to active civil society associations in the area.

With all the data interviews collected, next started the coding process by labelling the transcribed interviews into preliminary codes that filters the relevant statements from irrelevant ones. Then later, generalise those preliminary codes into mega codes that divides the entries into general themes of the study. And finally classify each entry in its correspondent general emerged theme (Smith, 2010).

The following methodological scheme was made out of literature showing key performance indicators determining the status of local community participation in the tourism development process. These indicators will be applied to the findings of the study as an evaluation scale.

In addition to the interviews, government planning documents were collected and examined to understand the issues of concern to planners in the study region. Goals, objectives, and policies, as well as the ways and extent to which the participatory

planning principles have been, and are being, considered in the official documents were examined.

Table 1: CBT specific issues and indicators.

Issue	Indicators
Social Education	-Education of tourists -Education of community -Training and skills development of staff members
Community decision making	Community decision-making structures
Community benefits Culture	-Community benefits from tourism -Cultural appreciation and conservation
Environmental Biodiversity and conservation	-Local community involvement in conservation projects in the area
Crosscutting Networking and collaboration	-Partnerships and collaborations

Source: (Mearns, 2012 quoted in (Bulatović & Rajović, 2016).

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Education of tourists

It is commonly assumed that tourists' interaction with nature makes them environment aware and responsible (Russell, 1994 quoted in (Orams, 1997)). This might be the simplest way of tourist education as it is self-acquired. However, other more formal ways of education remain dependent of many factors limiting its effectiveness. (Orams, 1997) cited diverse range of ages, educational backgrounds, cultures and communication difficulties as the main challenges complicating the process of tourists' education. Moreover, the most challenging factor may be time limitation, audience non-captivity and frequent distractions. All these factors combined make tourists' education process dependent on many factors together which make it highly complicated process.

Luck (2003) analysed distinct differences between captive and non-captive audiences. Captive audiences are usually motivated by external rewards, such as grades, certificates, and diplomas, while non-captive audiences are more internally motivated. Their rewards are intrinsic and relate to self-enrichment, self-improvement, a better life and similar rewards.

The findings here show that this process is more likely to be accomplished by civil society associations betting on ecotourism as a game changer of tourism in protected areas. They contribute, also to promoting ecotourism in the park. Through informative folds they try to reach tourist with the most basic principles of environment awareness. Yet, ecotourism managers and owners also participate in this process to some extent, as they are most in contact with tourist, but to them this intervention may be put to other limitations such fear of disturbing clients and not having enough competence to perform such tasks.

It is important to note here, that the contribution of public agencies in this matter is merely noticed, as private stakeholders state that its presence is strictly administrative.

4.2 Education of community

The local community awareness of conservation is crucial to its achievement. Thus, training and education of community groups that are in direct contact with tourists at least or those implied in the touristic activity is maximising the potential of tourism as an instrumental tool for distribution of benefits, poverty reduction and economic empowerment (Mayaka & Akama, 2007).

Both civil society associations and public agencies tend to contribute in the education of local community through sensitisation programmes made specially to spread awareness of environmental and heritage conservation. Associations contribute also to the development of local communities in collaboration with the HCEFLCD. This collaboration led to build rural infrastructure in the park such as roads, circuits road signs. Independently, the associations participate in sustainable development on the basic social approaches like illiteracy program and women empowerment.

It is pretty obvious here that the process of community education must be included in the general tourism development policies, taking into consideration not only local and current needs but also international and future requirements, by preparing local future stakeholders and firms to anticipate local sector demands (Zagonari, 2009).

4.3 Community benefits from tourism

A local community can benefit from tourism activities in many different ways and on different aspects. But, the general agreed concept of benefit is improvement or reduction of a given condition to individuals and communities. (Driver et al 1991 quoted in (Besculides et al., 2002) classifies benefit levels as personal (physical and psychological), sociocultural, economic, and environmental.

On the other hand, civil society association establish collaborations with nearby universities to conduct various studies on the park concerning many aspects such as biodiversity and heritage valorisation. Also, there are some association that have contributed to the creation of ecolodges in the park. Association also act as a sustainable development link between local communities and ecolodges by helping local cooperation in marketing their products within ecolodges visitors.

Moreover, the higher communities benefit from tourism the more they become supportive to tourism development programmes. Yet, (Wang & Pfister, 2008). Concludes that personal benefit of community individuals can play a more important role in the residents' favourable attitude toward tourism.

4.4 Cultural appreciation and conservation

Heritage and environmental conservation is matter of high priority to civil society associations as they contribute to sensitizing and valuing environmental issues. Preserving the ecosystem is also the ultimate objective of the HCEFLCD as it is stated in the administration objectives. It also monitors the fauna and flora state in the park and intervene in case of any disorders.

Concerning the local community, the index of environmental appreciation is defined by its interaction with natural resources. The challenge here may appear in the community members overuse of natural resource (mainly trees cutting for wood supply or to make land surface for cannabis plantations). Authorities tried to implement many alternatives for the sake of natural resource conservation but the local population's reaction was not as favourable as expected due to ineffectiveness of the alternatives presented as they stated.

It is noted that families that have a member or more employed in tourism tend to have higher

understanding of conservation and environment awareness as compared to those who are neither employed in tourism nor exposed to tourism. In other words, greater local participation in ecotourism or local development initiatives is more likely to generate positive behaviour conservation programs. (Stem et al., 2003) confirms that indirect participation of local communities is associated with proconservation attitudes more than direct income participants alone. Conservation and cultural appreciation to (Andereck et al., 2005) may be related to other variables such as level of contact with tourists, level of involvement in making decisions and level of knowledge about the industry.

4.5 Local community involvement in conservation projects

Obviously, the integration of local communities into management plan is essential for any sustainable development of tourism. Ways and degrees of integration may vary depending on each different situation and its surrounding factors. However, away from what idealistic management plans ought to include, local communities themselves may have different expectation toward what they want more participation in development. In this sense, (Mehta & Kellert, 1998) found that local communities want basic infrastructural developments such as trail and bridge improvement or construction and drinking-water facilities more than anything else.

As they are provided with the basic infrastructures, community members seek more involvement in conservation plans and develop more favourable perception of environment protection. (Moore et al., 2007) adds more benefits for this kind of involvement such as social aspects associated with membership, mental and physical benefits, and the knowledge that their contribution is preserving and improving the local environment.

The integration of local community in the sustainable development process and consequently in ecotourism development, is not running in its perfect status. Officially, the administration which is in charge of planning and managing the park states that contributing to sustainable development of the local communities is highly important in its agenda. But on the ground, the facts speak for themselves. the association note that the HCEFLCD intervention in the park is strictly administrative (law reinforcement and

protected areas regulation). While for local communities, the only hope to sustainable development integration is civil society association.

Planning and executing small scale socioeconomic projects along with infrastructure facilities taking in consideration the logistic, financial, and human resources these associations have. The HCEFLCD states that Cannabis plantation is an obstacle to sustainable development within local communities because they refuse to give it up and any other alternative presented by the HCEFLCD. While the local community consider that alternatives presented by HCEFLCD are not enough to provide them needed income to a living that they are already struggling with the cannabis plantation.

4.6 Community decision-making structures

When it comes to a deeper integration of communities such as participating in the decision-making process, a whole different set of factors seems to control the structure of this integration taking in consideration different categories of actors implied in this process. (Richins, 2000) distinguishes between three levels of influences in this sense: inter-personal, intra-personal and circumstantial influences. However, according to him, these levels of influence can fit either in community needs or structural framework.

Jamal & Stronza (2009) analysis indicates two more important factors in the structure of community-based decision-making: (1) ensuring the sustainability of tourism and natural resources and (2) control and management of tourism enterprises and activities. These factors are more relevant in protected areas where integrating tourism into traditional park functions becomes considerably complicated, due to financial or structural constraints.

The structure of tourism structure generally in Morocco, is centric around the tourism ministry as the main governmental agency in charge of planning, managing, and developing the sector. On ecotourism level, since it is an activity practiced mostly in protected areas, many other public and private actors interfere in the development process of this sector. Here, we can note the interference of various actors such as the HCEFLCD, civil society associations, private ecolodge owners, local community, and other governmental agencies. It is imperative to point out at this stage that the degree of local community

implication in the decision-making process is case-specific, despite the general sector structure in the country.

The tourism sector structure incoherence may appear clearly in the promotion of the sector. It still primitively done by word of mouth and some social media websites. Also, as noted by the majority of actors, concerning ecotourism, the absence of the regulation law organizing touristic activities within protected areas is a real challenge that stands as an obstacle for developing the sector.

4.7 Training and skills development of staff members

Any integration of local community in the tourism development process would put to the test, in the first place, existing skills that those community members have. (Mayaka & Akama, 2007) set four challenges addressing the question of community training and skills judging their integration in developing countries: 1) the multidisciplinary nature of tourism; 2) difficulty to where should tourism studies be properly implemented through different levels of education frameworks; 3) lack of academic debates and discussion within the educational process; 4) lack coordination between industry and educational training institutions.

It is generally noted that in local or national development strategies, government emphasizes on professional aspect of tourism staff in the development of the sector. But, effectively, there is no way this approach can be noticed on the ground considering the fact that the absolute majority of the interviewed tourism staff or observed ones have had a very weak training or none at all.

And even if tourism studies are implemented in the majority of Moroccan universities and other intuitions, yet they are often included in unrelated departments and unconnected courses distributed in different fields such as sociology and geography. Consequently this leads to tourism teaching and training strategies appear incoherent and ineffective (Zagonari, 2009).

These conditions leave the associations with a clear state of mind that the state has no serious willness to develop the tourism sector. But to civil society associations, consider the intervention of the HCEFLCD as strictly administrative, law reinforcement procedures that concerns park territory and forest

spaces with regulative laws over agricultural activities of local population. As to ecolodges, neither the intervention of the HCEFLCD nor the tourism ministry is noted.

4.8 Partnerships and collaborations

Maybe one of the most crucial factors in managing a destination is reconciliation the different views or perception of the stakeholders interfering in this process. This challenge can be overcome, theoretically, by the establishment of a compromising collaboration between included stakeholders. In fact, even the concept's definition may defer throughout literature, but one the most common ones can be the one presented by (Jamal and Getz 1995:188) quoted in (Aas et al., 2005) : 'process of joint decision-making among autonomous, key stakeholders of an inter-organizational, community tourism domain to resolve planning problems of the domain and/or manage issues related to the planning and development of the domain'.

However, to establish a real an effective collaboration, the stakeholders must at least hold a minimum knowledge of the concept. local professionals in Chaouen and especially ecolodge owners may severely lack this kind of knowledge even some of them are supervised or trained by local civil society association, but they remain far away from the professional aspect. At this point, the government should raise the community's knowledge of local heritage conservation, and most importantly restructuring the stakeholders so that each one can stick to its defined role (Aas et al., 2005). However, depending on the region's characteristics, there might appear another level of collaboration constraints consisting of power inequalities and institutional practices. These constraints can affect the influence of stakeholders on collaborative arrangements (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999).

Actors working on different aspects in this sector, usually collaborate with each other for realizing common projects. The civil society associations have 3 levels of collaboration: 1) international collaborations with association from Spain the majority of the cases. 2) collaboration with governmental Moroccan agencies. 3) collaborations with other civil society associations locally. Ecolodges collaborate also with civil society associations from whom they get considerable support such as professional training, promotion, and consulting.

Other association are included as a strategic partner cooperation with the HCEFLCD.

The HCEFLCD considers this partnership as done with local community since CSAs are their representative principally. On other aspects of their intervention in the park, the HCEFLCD could establish collaborations with other public authorities' bodies and their local representatives. These kinds of collaborations may be needed when planning, executing, or managing cross-territory project that may interfere with other governmental agencies affiliations.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study tackled the function of CBT ventures as a tool for tourism development. It examined the contribution of local resident ecolodges that are selling accommodation services to the tourists visiting Talassemtane National Park in Chaouen. The different aspects of this contribution (positive/negative) were identified and highlighted in the light of theoretical framework key concepts.

The study area possesses considerable natural and cultural potential such as the beauty of the landscape, the presence of a large variety of local traditions customs and artisanal products, great diversity of environments in a large territory, existence of valuable natural areas that may be further enhanced in terms of enjoyment, and presence of beach tourism in coastal areas that can be integrated with ecotourism. However, its infrastructure and promotion are inadequate due to local government's lack of attention to tourism industry. Therefore, the city in general, and the national park particularly may be subject to mass and unsustainable tourism activities (Lamnadi, 2017).

Alongside civil society association which contribute to promoting ecotourism in the park through informative folds they try to reach tourist with the most basic principles of environment awareness. Also, ecolodge managers and owners participate in this process to some extent. However, an intervention from public authorities or private actors is also necessary to felicitate marketing and assistance aspects (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016). Tolkach & King (2015) perceived it from quite a different angle; they suggested an appropriate CBT venture should consist of a collaboration/ partnership between government, private actors, and local community on an equal level of contribution.

This equal contribution could be referred to as some sort of partnership/collaboration between the stakeholders of the sector. It contributes to an adequate form of tourism development in rural areas where the only form of economic activity generating benefit is tourism (Giampiccoli, 2014).

In the same sense, the intervention of civil society associations in Chaouen, can be described as the catalyst that provokes a mutual interaction between private and public actors in the area. This interaction is the founding basis of any potential structural collaboration implying the two parties. Another aspect of this intermediate role which NGOs play in the establishment of structural collaboration between stakeholders might be the professional training of ecolodges' owners/managers which in most of cases are practicing in the field without any previous knowledge or professional training. This 'blind' practise of tourism professions, even if it has positive impact on local economy and job creation in Chaouen (Lamnadi, 2017), it could negatively affect the destination's image on the long term. The personnel's lack of environmental knowledge and professional aspect may lead to unsustainable tourism practices. Given these types of collaborations/partnerships, Civil society association were found to establish partnership agreements with nearby universities to conduct various studies on the park concerning many aspects such as biodiversity and heritage valorisation.

On another level, there are some association that have contributed to the creation of ecolodges in the park. Association also act as a sustainable development link between local communities and ecolodges by helping local cooperation in marketing their products within ecolodges visitors. This form of partnership may be considered as collaborative networks between stakeholders. These networks offer better prospects for delivering effective and sustainable tourism development (Tolkach & King, 2015).

Yet, The HCEFLCD considers this partnership as done with local community since CSAs are their representative principally. On other aspects of their intervention in the park, the HCEFLCD could establish collaborations with other public authorities' bodies and their local representatives. This network performance may be needed when planning, executing, or managing cross-territory project that may interfere with other governmental agencies

affiliations. However, different stakeholders contributing to this process, despite their large numbers, often they are not organised or embodied in a global network which complicates their work on the ground and diminishes any positive effect of their presence (Lamnadi, 2016).

Nevertheless, if we apply Tosun's (2000) tourism development process limitations to the findings of this study, the operational limitations, consisting of centralisation of public administrations, lack of coordination between tourism professionals and lack of tourism data, would be clearly embodied in the intervention of the HCEFLCD in the park being strictly administrative (law reinforcement and protected areas regulation) on the one hand, and the lack of the administration's coordination with other stakeholders concerning the management of the park in this case on the other.

Concerning the cultural limitations, the same administration's tackling of the problem of Cannabis plantations inside the park territory caused a case of conflict between them and the local community. The HCEFLCD consider these plantations as an obstacle to sustainable development within local communities because they refuse to give it up and any other suggested alternatives. Given that touristic activity may work as a development model, ecolodges economic benefit has the potential to build a process of capital accumulation (Dachary, 2015), local community consider that alternatives presented by HCEFLCD are not enough to provide them needed income to cover their basic needs. Thus, there may a cultural gap between the way public administration perceives the sustainable development of local community. This latter through time developed special cultural and anthropological ties with the surrounding environment; the daily life activities and their way of existence, in general, may stand as a cultural limitation to public development plans.

Finally, the structural limitations may appear clearly in the promotion of the sector. It still primitively done by word of mouth and some social media websites. Also, as noted by the majority of actors, concerning ecotourism, the absence of the regulation law organizing touristic activities within protected areas is a real challenge that stands as an obstacle for developing the sector. The stakeholders operating in this case, the attitude of tourism professionals and public agencies is clearly affected by the political orientation of national management policy in general.

Adding to that, lack of local qualified and well-trained personnel carrying out tourism activities, and the domination of business opportunities and initiatives by national scale projects planned to develop the seaside product.

Obviously, without a strong operational presence of private actors on the ground, the previous established collaborations may fall into an unsuccessful CBT practice (Mitchell and Ashly, 2010). Therefore, in order to establish a sustainable form of tourism, Moroccan authorities and private/public stakeholders must take into consideration different aspects of local communities by compromising their strategies with their lifestyle needs and by avoiding any violations that may negatively affect them or their environment (Lamnadi, 2016).

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Processo Editorial / Editorial Process

Editor Chefe/Editor-in-chief: PhD Thiago D. Pimentel (UFJF).

Recebido em 21 de Novembro de 2017; aceito em 15 de Janeiro de 2018; publicado online 05 de Fevereiro de 2018.

Received on November 21, 2017; accepted on January 15, 2018, published online on February 05, 2018.

Texto original/ Original paper. Sistema de revisão cega por pares / Double blind review system.