

# ADVENTURE TOURISM AS A NEW TOOL OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION - A CASE IN POINT CONCERNING AN ETHNIC GROUP OF PYGMIES

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## Abstract

The text tries (1) to define problems that globalization has inflicted on the tourist industry and (2) to highlight opportunities offered by the adventure tourism. Supported by our focus groups, the qualitative research method we applied helped us map problems afflicting the process of inducting the ethnic group of Pygmies into the business of adventure tourism. The information was obtained from the Pygmies themselves and the representatives of both churches and the non-profit sector whose job brought them into cooperation with the ethnic group. The SWOT analysis results indicated that the adventure tourism organized on the island of Bunyonyi by the local Pygmy community can be regarded as an example of good practice. The results demonstrate that a detailed SWOT analysis is able to minimize the threats and uncertainties. In fact, even the preliminary research conducted in September 2019 showed a rise in the income of individual Pygmies and their families. Special emphasis in the analysis results was given to the necessity of maintaining and supporting the indigenous Pygmy culture. Designed to increase the standard of living enjoyed by this rural Pygmy community, our project suggests a method of achieving the goal - adventure tourism organized by the community itself.

## Keywords

Adventure Tourism, Community, Develeopment, Ethnic Group

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## I. Introduction

The ethnic group of Pygmies living on the island of Bunyonyi has been chosen in view of multireligiosity and ethnic composition of the island's population. The population comprises Christians, Muslims and the Pygmies themselves, who still follow their native religion and practice their culturally specific way of life. Moreover, belonging among the poorest inhabitants of the island, the Pygmies have just limited opportunities to boost their income in any significant measure. That is where we see an opportunity for using tools of development cooperation now newly available in the globalized world. The tools can also be beneficially applied to ethnic groups previously underrepresented in tourist trade and neglected by travel agencies. The agencies, if anything, offered their clients just optional trips to the ethnic groups, but the income received by the group was just meager and sometimes depended solely on whether or not the tourists bought a souvenir from the local people.

Organizing the project, the author relied on her hands-on experience and her engagement in a social & healthcare NGO operating in the region. Currently, we discuss some innovative tools of development cooperation, with the adventure tourism among them. We believe that without providing relevant know-how and adequate financial assistance to the poorest groups and/or tribes, this form of gainful business can hardly be launched.

Our adventure tourism project can be supported individually by private donors and benefactors, but also by companies, through project calls, etc.

The researchers (e.g., Ahn, Lee & Shafer 2002; Twinning-Ward & Butler 2002; McCool, Moisey & Lime 2001, Frauman & Banks, 2011) have evidenced that communities' supports

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are vital in ensuring long-term success in tourism development and the fact that it is impossible to sustain tourism to a destination that is not supported by the local people. Hence, it is important to understand their perceptions of tourism and how have tourism affect their livelihood from the perspectives of social, economics, environmental and cultural.

The name Pygmy has been derived from Greek "pygmaio" and Latin "pygmaei". Now the word is used as a generic term referring to the ethnic groups of hunters and gatherers living in the forests of Cameroon, Gabon, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo. Unfortunately, driven by destitution and lured to cities by the vision of livable wages, Pygmies start to abandon their traditional way of life and adjust themselves to living in towns. There, more often than not, they become cheap labor for large (frequently Chinese) companies or end up as beggars on the streets. Their situation is alarming since the people are unable to accommodate the rapid change caused by their leaving the rural ethnic community, to embrace the urban way of life and to find successfully a place in their new society. Some of those who might wish to return back home could not do so, because they had sold their house and land to pay for travelling to town and starting their new existence there.

## **II. Adventure tourism**

Adventure tourism will be appreciated by all those who prefer personal and intimate touch with a specific site of interest. This type of tourism is chiefly a lived and subjective experience greatly dependent on a suitable marketing strategy - the tourists, now perceived as customers, are supposed to become a kind of family members of a place they visit. "Adventure tourism is a multisensory, positive and comprehensive emotional experience whose receivers may develop a sense of intellectual transformation". True enough, no product offered to potential tourists can produce this effect and give satisfaction to all of them (Schneider, Fialová, Výskot, 2009). Still, the market tool of adventure tourism has become a firmly established and readily available part of the tourist trade. When properly prepared, an offer of adventure tourism will appeal to the mentality of the most demanding clients who seek primarily some deeper meaning of the experience. To give an example, such approaches are easily recognizable in the eco-tourism (Adventure tourism, 2006). If the adventure tourism is to fulfill its potential, it should ideally embrace five principle levels: the one positioned lowest is the physical level (interest); then comes motivation (sensory perception) followed by reason (teaching), emotions (unique experiences) and mentality (transformation).

The physical level (interest) is typical of curiosity sparked in a potential customer. This elementary level is where the relevant expectations are generated and turned into wishes and alacrity to undergo a specific experience. Initially, the customers / tourists will notice an advertisement or a promotional campaign. Later on, they will start to be motivated by their senses: exposed to the tourism product offered to them, they will explore it, get to know it and have their subconscious affected by it. Such activities may be driven by tasting local food, petting a local animal, etc.

On the level of reason, opinions are formed and sensory stimulation is supported by rational enquiry into the new environment. Customers will decide whether they are happy about the tourism product or not. A good product will provide them with information they did not know previously and will give them a chance of learning something new. The new knowledge can be acquired deliberately or unwittingly, an example of the former case being a commentary delivered by a guide showing visitors around a castle.

The emotional level rests in gratification which the experience can provide, but emotions are hard to guess and control beforehand. Some people may be happy about weaving a wicker basket or forging a nail.

The mental level is the top one. In case an emotional response to a unique experience is strong enough (and regardless whether it is positive or negative), it might cause a personal transformation and, by extension, change the customer's entire way of life. The people may start to see the world differently, may take up a new hobby, reshape their thinking or even give a new meaning to their lives (Schneider, Fialová, Výskot, 2009).

### **Developing world and its involvement in international tourism**

As regards developed countries, the ever rising standard of living and more leisure time on people's hands have turned tourism into a widespread phenomenon of economic and social relevance. The occurrence, however, has affected also the developing countries - positioned as the "receiving" countries, their engagement in international tourism intensifies (Hrala, 2005). The process of involving developing countries in the tourism and improving their economies began to gain momentum in the 1980s. Unfortunately, the fall of colonial rule and winning independence did not automatically stimulated the economic growth of the countries. Their economic ties with the former colonial powers still influence both export and import of their goods and services, the tourism services not excepting. Moreover, not all former colonies have been developing in the same direction and at the same pace. In fact, the developing countries have split into a variety of different types and groups, and their engagement in the international tourism has been influenced by a host of economic and political factors.

The thorny issues of tourism in developing countries

Booming tourism is considered an effective tool of a country's economic growth and ongoing development. The involvement of developing countries in the process is closely related to the overall level of their development, and the development is greatly influenced by difficult issues that the countries have to tackle, such as (Palatková, 2011):

- Social and demographic problems

These are typical of almost all countries ranked as developing countries, mostly characterized by a relatively young population and strong population growth. Such a situation entails poverty, scarcity of food, insufficient sources of water fit for human consumption, substandard education and the exodus of the better educated to developed countries.

- Economic problems

If there is a single most vexing problem of the developing world, it is an inadequately formulated economic policy. The economies of developing countries still rely on agriculture or heavy industry, while their tourism policy is either non-existent or just superficial. In addition, the countries are haunted by high unemployment rates which translate themselves into social problems. Considered a major issue can also be the fact that the countries' economic activities are in the hands of foreign investors and the countries themselves are mostly heavily indebted. Their manufacturing capacities and raw-material bases are insufficient and the countries are just marginally involved in the international economic relations.

- Environmental problems

The issues of environment protection have recently been extensively discussed. It is not therefore surprising that tourists generally prefer destinations offering clean environment. Regrettably, that is exactly what the developing countries are mostly unable to offer. This sad fact can be attributed to the above-mentioned extensive agriculture, to environment-hostile production and mining. Another major issue is access to potable water. Naturally, the developing countries wish to catch up with the developed ones as fast as possible, but often at the cost of devastating their own living environment. They apply pesticides long banned in the

developed world and disregard exhaust fumes in terms of their quantity and composition. Their inhabitants utilize water sources to wash themselves, to wash their clothes, to wash cattle...

- Political and safety problems

Safety is a factor significantly affecting the tourism business. Wars and ethnic conflicts may become considerations deterring potential visitors. The danger of abductions and/or terrorist attacks is likely to dissuade also travel agencies from organizing trips to countries so afflicted, while tourists inclined to make their own arrangements are not so many. Inadequacies of public utilities (health care, educational system and, yes, safety) may shape the tourism policy as well. Counted among other obstacles that hinder the involvement of developing countries in the international travel can be poor air traffic; subpar infrastructure (transportation, lodging, ...); unreliable power supply; mismanaged waste disposal; or, for example, misrepresentations about tourism potential. All together, these factors will compromise a developing country's chances of profiting from international tourism.

### **III. Empirical section**

The research effort was primarily to conduct the SWOT analysis. What chances of establishing an adventure tourism business has a Pygmy community yet inexperienced in this kind of gainful occupation?

The qualitative part of the research required that we created two focus groups. The first one included representatives of foreign non-profit organizations together with persons from the local churches, all engaged in working with the Pygmies. The second one comprised 12 people from the ethnic Pygmy community itself. Undertaking the research, we employed the technique of open non-structured interviews. The results were finalized in discussion with both our focus groups and then subject to the SWOT analysis. The principle research was preceded by a preliminary research covering two groups of tourists (8 and 6 strong) who had already visited the Pygmy community as participants in an adventure tourism trip.

#### **SWOT analysis**

The following analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) has been carried out to become the basis of a proposed project focused on adventure tourism in the Laike Buniony area.

**Strengths:** traditional culture perpetuated and community customs preserved; community willing to participate in the adventure tourism project; natural assets available (pure unpolluted air; beautiful landscape - lakes, mountains, rare wildlife); needed infrastructure close at hand.

Revenue generated by tourism will benefit the insular Pygmy communities and help them develop the island's rural areas; improve hygiene conditions; acquire better education; alleviate poverty and raise their standard of living generally.

**Weaknesses:** difficulties in communicating with the community; insufficiency of information about tourism; poor education, especially education concerning tourism; community premises still inadequate to receive visitors (lodging, sanitary facilities); lack of experience in catering for tourists; Pygmy community not generally known.

The rural areas, however, pose tough strictures and challenges for the anticipated project. The Pygmies especially: know nothing about adventure tourism; do not know how to make their community attractive for tourists and how to behave towards them; are unaware of what is needed to take care of tourists and offer them entertainment; lack the needed financial footing; use no advertising and promotion and are scared of new and unknown things.

Opportunities: interest in traditional cultures taken by tourists; maintenance of traditions and cultures; diversification of options offered to tourists; development of infrastructure; benefits reaped by ethnic communities and rural areas.

Threats: carefree attitude of the ethnic group to time; financial crisis discouraging potential tourists; unrests in the country; safety and health hazards (terrorism, Covid-19, etc); natural disasters (extreme droughts or rainy seasons); volatility of the tourist industry; propensity of travel agencies to misuse the opportunity to get their share of the community profits.

Primary objective of the project: Improving the quality of life enjoyed by Pygmy community on the island of Laike Buniony.

Secondary objectives of the project: Increasing community income; making the community known among potential clients; and enhancing awareness and knowledgeability of the community members about foreign cultures and ways of life in the home countries of coming tourists, their customs and languages.

#### Description of the community

The Lake Bunyonyi area offers relatively favorable conditions for agriculture, particularly the production of potatoes. The Pygmy community keeps goats, raises cows and catches fish. The animals are bred to obtain meat, milk and to manufacture milk products. The color of wool obtained from local sheep ranges from black to white, through many hues of brown. Members of the community pursue also other activities: typically they weave wicker baskets and make a variety of handmade products to be offered on the market, e.g. jewelry, pots and pans. They live in houses that they build themselves of sun-baked clay bricks. The clay is obtained locally (just like other building materials) and the simple houses are relatively easy to erect, without relying on any other sources of materials and/or energies. A typical house has a roof supported by wooden beams and covered by straw, but roofs of a metal sheet or similar material has recently gained certain popularity. All in all, the clay is readily available, the houses are cheap, easily built, and they offer excellent heat and sound insulation. Considered as a source of material, the clay is sustainable and the houses make no claims on non-renewable resources of the country.

To grow plants, the locals use no chemicals and/or fertilizers, only natural manure. At present, the Pygmy community has no lodgings where to accommodate potential visitors. Our project does not suggest that the visitors should live with local families - we believe it more convenient for the tourist to live separately, seeing that such arrangement will preserve the privacy of both the visitors and the local community.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The project is supposed to take advantage of adventure tourism in an attempt to increase the standard of living enjoyed by the Pygmy community. More specifically, the project aims to build houses constructed like the local houses where tourists could be conveniently accommodated. The tourists / visitors will be offered a series of events through which they will be included in the daily routines of the community. Before the project is initiated, the Pygmy community members directly engaged in it will be trained so that they are prepared to meet a "western" culture and they know what can be expected of the tourist and how to behave towards them. The training will cover also a course of basic Spanish. A great advantage lies in the fact that the Ugandan official language is English (taught also at "touring" schools) and the Pygmies can speak it.

With the current trends considered, the adventure tourism emerges as a financially sound strategy since it supports sustainable development; it is not a burden to the environment; and it does not require any additional funding as the cost of operations and maintenance will be met

by what is paid by the tourists. The project marketing strategy emphasizes deliberate public relations policy designed to catch the attention of potential clients, to build up good reputation and to obtain the needed feedback. This stage will take up some time as its importance should not be underestimated. The adventure tourism on the Bunyonyi island could become even more attractive if every client is given a chance of bringing home a product handmade by the locals (or possibly by himself / herself, supervised by the locals). In the future, the community can face growing competition from similarly targeted projects. Such competition can be fought off, for example, by innovating, expanding services and using the feedback information to offer the clients whatever they might find interesting and attractive. Beneficial could prove to be the ever more effective tool of Internet advertising that would give the prospective tourists a more precise idea (using video clips, for instance) of what they could expect visiting the community. To employ this tool, the community will need a specialist well versed in ITs.

Information on this innovative way of spending holiday will be available on a dedicated website. Visiting the website, the potential clients will be offered a detailed description of the community and of staying with the community. They will be notified of all circumstances; informed about the price; shown photos of the community; told whom to contact; and offered to inspect references and read discussion. The stays will also be advertised on the websites of foreign non-profit organizations and the International Ecotourism Society. An information about two-day stays with a Pygmy community will also be published on the Czech Internet and in Czech printed media with a tourism bias.

It is vital that the tourists, before coming to the community, are advised of what can be expected from the local inhabitants, what is considered good behavior and what should be better avoided. Following the advice, the risk of misunderstandings between the visitors and the locals should be effectively eliminated. Relevant information can also be found at the related website. Upon arrival, each tourist shall be asked to confirm in a signed document that he/she has been instructed about conditions and is ready to meet them. To avoid any unwelcome surprises, the community members, for their part, shall be acquainted with the manners of people from economically developed countries, with their sensitive spots and their patterns of behavior.

Benefits of the project:

The project will benefit primarily the members of a Pygmy community living in a specific village on the Bunyonyi island. The community will thus obtain a source of income which will help them develop and maintain their traditions and customs. Money earned from the tourist business will go mainly to those community members who will be directly involved in catering for the clientele, who will render the relevant services and be engaged in implementing the program. At times when the community has no visiting tourists, the service providers will keep the needed facilities in working order. In this manner the project will generate new job opportunities, Indirectly, it will benefit also local environment, its native flora and fauna; it will revive traditional arts and crafts and these again will strengthen the community identity and provide new alternatives for sustainable development. Generally speaking, by offering something out of the common (which is still the case of adventure tourism), the entire region can be made more appealing for tourists and can attract a greater crowd of visitors.

The planned project may be useful for not only this Pygmy community (one of many still maintaining its traditional ways of life even in these modern times) but also for other comparable communities around the world. Inspired by the project, they might be convinced to start their own adventure tourism projects based on their own culture and customs. The new income will then assist them in perpetuating and developing their traditions. The project is also supposed to raise the standard of living of this rural community. It provides a blueprint for achieving the goal through adventure tourism organized by the community.

Implementing the project, the local community is expected to build accommodations for the prospective tourists - their design will be just basic, upgraded with a few modern amenities. There will be beds there, bedside tables, chairs, a chemical toilet and a simple washroom. Money donated by corporations and individuals from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia has already been invested to buy a site where a small house for the anticipated tourists will be erected. The duty of construction will be assumed by the local people, with a Czech NGO supervising the effort and its funding. People assigned to take care of the visitors have already been chosen.

The project will offer one-day and two-day programs encompassing traditional agricultural and other daily activities associated with breeding livestock; processing milk; preparing local dishes; organizing leisure-time pursuits for kids; teaching at local school; attending a course of local cuisine for ladies, and more.

The task of coordinating all the activities and running the programs planned for visitors will be entrusted to a Pygmy Chief Coordinator, who will be responsible for the tourists (both individually and as a group) and who will supervise the other, lower-level coordinators. This person must speak English, since he/she will have to handle any misunderstandings and/or conflicts possibly emerging so that both the parties - the tourists and the community members - feel safe and comfortable. No lesser importance will be attached to the privacy of both the parties.

And most importantly, the indigenous culture and traditions must be kept alive while the civic pride of the Pygmies is kept intact.

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