

Abstract

Riverston; for its natural and cultural significance, tourism industry emerged there and expanded with more community engagement. Riverston being a Community Based Tourism site, this study aimed at discovering the perception of Riverston community on tourism development further focusing on the market opportunities, challenges and strategies for the way forward. Data was collected from Riverston community who engage in tourism through in-depth Interviews with semi structured questions, and the sample was selected based on Convenient Sampling technique. Data was analyzed through content analysis. The findings disclose that challenging the authentic culture, traditional livelihood shifting towards tourism, lack of awareness and knowledge of the tourism industry among the community, impact of legal restrictions on the community to go for tourism, lack of education that has impacted on unplanned tourism industry are the Socio- cultural categories that have been recognized. Impact of Changing the livelihood to tourism and new tourism SMEs on good living standards, in place of the income generated from Chena and cardamom cultivation banned in the area replaced by tourist income and the employment opportunities generated, rustic Riverston getting developed in terms of infrastructure with the tourism development and that benefiting the living conditions of the community are the Economic categories identified. Further, results indicate Forest Conservation policies have impacted the community's living in high magnitude and the challenge for the cultivators shifting from agriculture to tourism has been highlighted which has resulted unplanned tourism procedure. In addition, timely need for a well-planned sustainable tourism approach and awareness from ground level tourism practitioners was underscored by the data set.

Key Words: Community perception, tourism development, Riverston, challenges, suggestions