

ASSESSING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM-RELATED URBAN REGENERATION: A CASE OF KOCHI HERITAGE CITY, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In most developing countries, public participation has been considered as a key component for development initiatives. It refers to as an important factor in policymaking for the design and implementation of the urban regeneration process. Despite the continuous demand for participation in regeneration, there is evidence of low participation that has been identified in the assessment of participatory interest. The challenges in participatory approaches providing a sturdy evaluation related to the rapid urbanization of Kochi, India, limits the share of participatory theories for policymakers in the understanding of participation decline. Moreover, it shows difficulties in providing a common state of participation in policy development for tourism-related urban regeneration. Therefore, the article contributes to a critical examination of public participation in regeneration, which will help in conceptualizing public participation in tourism-related urban regeneration in Kochi. The participatory concept is discussed on the convergence of data collected from literature reviews for the constitution of public participation. The discussion is trying to advocate the opportunities and challenges of



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the current participation with academic and policy sides, which helps to stimulate future research on participation assessment.

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INTRODUCTION

Public Participation is considered as one of the most important elements in planning for regional development (Keogh, 1990). The “public” in the process of assessing public participation in Kochi, especially in Fort-Kochi, and Mattancherry is being considered as the stakeholders, those who have belongings to tourism and tourism-related services and being affected by tourism-related urban regeneration (TrUR); i.e., souvenir shop owners, guest house, hotel and hostel owners, and other tourism recreational activities providers. In view of a policy framework for effective urban and regional planning, most of the developing countries is considering public participation as a key component for any development initiatives, whether it is regeneration, revitalization, redevelopment, conservation or design (Mustapha et al., 2013). By the beginning of the 1980s, the link between tourism and urban regeneration has been made and since then tourism strategies have been considered a significant part of inner-city policy for regeneration and development (Hardy S et al., 1990; Nair & Sharma, 2017; Rahman & Abd Halim, 2021). Public participation in such development initiatives shows an interest in dynamism. Moreover, at present, most of the nations around the globe have been reporting lower participation interest (Bianchi, 2019; Liu et al., 2021).

In the subject matter of research as socio-cultural and economic discourse, it has been identified a necessity to create a provision in which public participation is accepted as fully in the policy framework process that may affect their lives (Lee, 2017; Rahman & Abd Halim, 2021). Progressively, tourism is widely seen as a tool for urban regeneration and many old cities especially in developing countries such as India, incorporate tourism into their regeneration process (Inbakaran, 2003). In the case of

Kochi heritage city, public participation plays a key factor to support the urban regeneration process based on tourism development (Menon & Edward, 2014). However, in the last decades in many heritage cities, it is being noticed that the interest in public participation has been decreasing (Chado et al., 2016; Nair & Dhanuraj, 2018). Therefore, this study addresses the assessment of public participation in TrUR through reviewing the literature which can help to identify the challenges in participation.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to assess the factors of public participation in tourism-related urban regeneration which may be the cause of impeding the public to participate in such regeneration initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEWS AND RESEARCH GAP

Concept of Public Participation

Public participation is regarded as a progressive exercise as it offers opportunities for the diverse interests of stakeholders to be incorporated. It is the process of mobilization of both human and natural resources to promote life and environmental quality which is imperative because government exclusively cannot provide all the required and expected needs for the people (Asatryan et al., 2017; Chado, 2018). Whereas, the assessment of such participation in Indian cities is much critical to express the interest of the public in participation towards planning (Baxi & Shah, 2017). According to Liu et al. (2021), public participation is considered as a tool to encourage the public to obtain opinion from the community which allows policymakers to make better decisions. Further, it states that, in public administration, the idea of public participation assessment is used to emphasize the philosophy of new public management in which public actors have the right to exert their control in policy implementing such public administrative actions (Hood, 1991; Liu et al., 2021).

The accountability of public participation has been considered a key component of success for any urban regeneration initiatives (Rahman & Abd Halim, 2021). It can be applied

in many ways, such as decision-making process, business-oriented development, policy framework design and implementation, etc. In Indian cities, participation in urban planning and their accountability has always been a concern in development practice, particularly since the sixties, and it was more emphasised in the early 80s (Rajvanshi, 2003). In the early years of redevelopment, many practitioners worked with communities at a local level as individuals or in small groups. By the 80s, the focus on participation was up-scaled (Kumar, 2016; Lane, 2005). Further, it was reflected in the introduction of decentralized structures through the seventy-fourth constitutional amendment act of 1994 (74th CAA-1994), along with other large economic reforms initiated in the early nineties, to make this more accountable (Sasidharan et al., 2020).

Moreover, Marzuki (2015), explained through their work on public participation as he states that, in such developing countries, for the democratisation of social values, better planning and fulfilment of public needs, effective public participation and their assessment on implementation is needed. Further, Marzuki (2015) cited from Slocum and Thomas-Slayer (1995) states that the measurement of public participation is a means to convey individual and the society's interests and concerns about the development plans, given that these planning activities would consequently affect the public generally and certain groups specifically. However, through many studies on the assessment, it is argued that when formal participatory approaches fail to incorporate the concerned public adequately, the local population can participate contrary and invariably will result in ineffective participation in such urban development initiatives (Chado, 2018; Liu et al., 2021). Therefore, Kim (2012) asserts that, for assessing public participation in such TrUR process effectively, it is important to elaborate the concept of integration of tourism and urban regeneration sustainability.

Understanding Tourism-related Urban Regeneration (TrUR)

Urban regeneration is considered a distinctively complicated policy field where it needs to address a variety of political, socio-cultural, environmental, and economic issues and it involves a partnership with a range of organisations with different public needs (Roberts & Sykes, 1999). So, Tourism-related Urban Regeneration (TrUR) is a field of research in which it is used to investigate such a government because of the complicated

and fragmented nature of its planning and development processes are taking place (Kim, 2012). The interactions and relationships between the actors of participation are therefore fundamental parts of the planning and development processes of TrUR (Hemphill et al., 2004). Therefore, from the review of literature, TrUR is defined as ‘the process of reinducing life into decaying assets of a historic city and developing future potential with growing tourism of the region’.

In addition, from the perspective of TrUR studies, the regeneration potential in tourism is based on the revival of old cities. Moreover, the potential of tourism-related urban regeneration shows the ability to create jobs for local communities which increases the economic regeneration from tourism activities into the local economy with the potential of the additional economic multiplier effect, and the creation of a new status and image for the host (Swarbrooke, 2000). However, in many heritage cities, especially in Kochi have seen these overlaid patterns of growth, whereas, in the process of urbanization, they are struggling to survive (Josna & Kasthurba, 2012). Therefore, it needs urban regeneration. In this process of regeneration, it is important to critically examine the local population to participate in the ease of sustainable growth of tourism (González, 2011).

Conceptual framework of Public Participation in TrUR

The concept of urban regeneration can be traced back to the mid 20th century, from the urban development programs of Baron Haussmann in Paris (Uysal, 2015). In continuation of the participation process, the public partnership also plays a key role in the success of urban regeneration. In reality, however, the concept of ‘public participation’ in many developing countries is more than often nothing but a hollow slogan with the fuzzy definition of the ‘public’ and manipulation of the participation activities (Sun, 2015).

Moreover, the fundamental belief behind the idea of public participation in the discourse of participatory approach in tourism-related urban regeneration is that ‘those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process and be able to make their input. (IAPP, 2007; Singh et al., 2017). Whereas, for the assessment of public participation in such regeneration initiatives, it is important to conceptualize

the theories of public participation which can use to better understand the challenges of public participation in regeneration (Chettiparamb, 2007). Urban regeneration is integrated with tourism to enhance the social and economic community of the region, and support the livelihood of the locals as well as the other stakeholders of the region. The assessment through conceptualizing the framework of public participation on integration in such tourism-related urban regeneration process enhances the socio-economy and tourism development in many developing countries (Aiesha & Evans, 2007; Brown & Chin, 2013). Therefore, from the synthesis of previous literature, an appropriate participatory framework has been formulated. The framework (figure 1) is conceptualised based on the explained principle of participation in such tourism-related urban regeneration initiatives to explain the level and challenges of public participation.

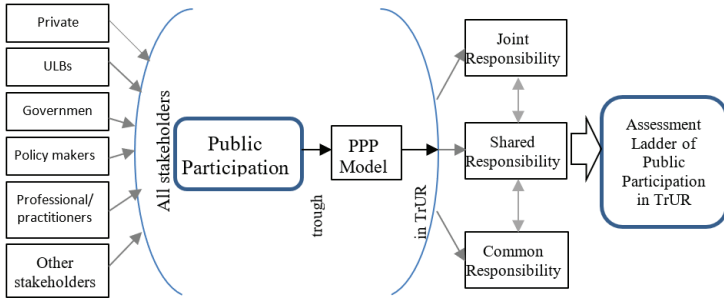


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Public Participation in Tourism-related Urban Regeneration

Source: Author

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the prospects of public participation in tourism-related urban regeneration in Kochi heritage city are presented. Haklay et al. (2018) emphasized that, for assessing public participation, it is important to conduct a survey among participants to validate the research outcomes. This research is a case-study approached-qualitative survey, which is based on theories of participation. For the assessment of public participation in Kochi heritage city, a qualitative survey has been done to determine the diversity of some topics of interest with a given population. The survey is carried out on 44 respondents effectively at Kochi heritage city in July-Sept 2021, and it was

performed for a couple of weeks to get appropriate information from the respondents. It is based on the grounded theory participation with theoretical sampling and constant comparison, involving direct and indirect variables. The survey is a pre-structured deductive qualitative survey that is based on the analysis of variables. The questionnaire is semi-structured and are pilot tested. Means and values deviations are descriptive in nature and used in the explanation of the responses gathered during the survey. Results are tested to determine whether there is any significant difference between the perception of respondents, and item mean score. Besides the questionnaire, pre-structured interviews have been conducted to verify the survey results.

Table 1. Survey Brief

Target sample	All stakeholders (having belongings to Kochi city), aged 18 and above
Sample unit	Individual survey
Location	Kochi heritage city (Fort-Kochi, and Mattancherry)
Methodology	Qualitative survey-face-to-face interview with a pre-structured questionnaire
Sample size	44 (52 valid interviews)
Sampling error	±3.50% (consideration)
Significant level	95%
Survey time	July-Sept. 2021

Source: Author

About Kochi

‘Kochi’ previously known as Cochin, a city situated in the Ernakulam district of Kerala, lies along the Malabar Coast of India. It is well known as the ‘Queen of the Arabian Sea’. Kochi is the district-headquarter of Ernakulam, famous for its palm green commercial city endowed with one of the finest natural harbours in the world. Kochi is the commercial capital and the most cosmopolitan city of Kerala.

For the administrative setup, the area under Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) encompasses Kochi, six municipalities and 25 panchayats covering an area of 632 km² and forms the largest urban agglomeration in Kerala. The city is administrated by the Corporation of Kochi (Cochin) (KOC). Kochi has 74 wards within 7 administrative zones. Due to the proximity to the Arabian Sea, Western Ghats and lagoons of

Alappuzha, the city of Kochi has been a prime location for commerce and defence in South Asia for ages. As per data released by Govt. of India for Census 2011, Kochi is an Urban Agglomeration coming under the category of Million Plus UA/City. The total population of the Kochi UA/Metropolitan region is 2,119,724 with an area of 440 km². The male population of which is 1,044,243 while the female population is 1,075,481.

Regarding the brief history of the city, it has an important place on the world map for voyagers and traders over the centuries, as it developed as an important port for traders around the world (Josna & Kasthurba, 2012). It has more than 2000 years back of history for development and evolution of the region. It is well known for its spices, cashew nuts, tea, coir products and handicrafts. Kochi had trade relationships with Arabs, Greek and Roman, Jews, Chinese and later the Colonials (Jeychandran, 2016).

Kochi has a cosmopolitan culture, highly influenced by historical trading partners, Portuguese, Dutch, Arab, Chinese, and Japanese. These trade relationships have a great influence on the cultural and religious aspects of Kerala's social structure, and also on the built heritage (Menon, 2016). Due to the passage of time and with the political reforms the built heritage they left formed as a vestige of the past (Menon, 1995; Rahman & Abd Halim, 2021).

Aspects of Tourism in Kochi

Tourism of Kerala is concentrated on natural and built heritage especially in Kochi, where over 80% of domestic and about 98% of the international tourists (part of total international tourists visited in Kerala) are frequent in the Kochi region (Tourism Statistics-Ministry of Tourism, 2009-2019), which demonstrates itself the importance of this region in Kerala tourism.

Table 2. Tourism Statistics of Kerala 2009-2019, Ernakulam District (Kochi) Tourism

Year	Foreign Exchange Earnings (₹ in Crore)	% increase	Earnings from Domestic tourists (₹ in Crore)	Total revenue generated from Tourism (direct & indirect) (₹ in Crore)	% increases
2010	3797.37	33.09		17348	31.12

2011	4221.99	11.18	10131.97	19037	9.735993
2012	4571.69	8.28	10883	20430	7.317329
2013	5560.77	21.63	11726.44	22926.55	12.22002
2014	6398.93	15.07	12981.91	24885.44	8.544199
2015	6949.88	8.61	13836.78	26689.63	7.249982
2016	7749.51	11.51	15348.64	29658.56	11.12391
2017	8392.11	8.29	17608.22	33383.68	12.56002
2018	8764.46	4.44	19474.62	36258.01	8.609985
2019	10271.06	17.19	24785.62	45010.69	24.13999
Ernakulam district (Kochi)					
Year	Foreign Exchange Earnings (₹ in Crore)	% increase	Total revenue generated from Tourism (direct & indirect) (₹ in Crore)	% increases	
2017	3489.24	13.36	9541.64	14.84	
2018	3902.37	11.84	10533.78	10.40	
2019	4508.32	15.53	12816.50	21.67	

Source: Author's synthesis from Tourism statistics 2009-2019, Gov of Kerala, India

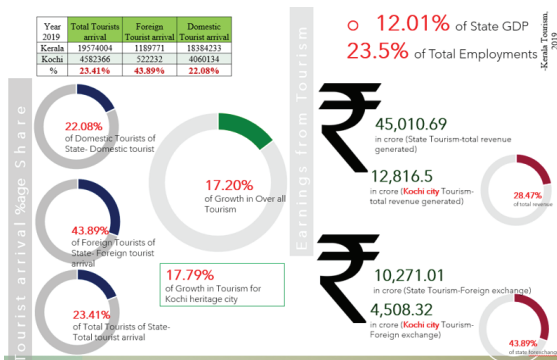


Figure 2. Kochi city Tourism Statistics, Kerala Tourism

Source: Author

Figure 02, shows the overall percentage of tourism arrival to Kochi-Kerala. In comparison, it is noticed that 17.79% of tourism growth in Kochi city, which reflects the 23.41% of total state tourism is only from Kochi city. In reference to earning from the tourism industry, it contributes 12.01% of state GDP and 23.50% of total employment. In 2019, total state revenue generated from tourism is ₹45010.69 crore whereas ₹12816.5 core itself from only Kochi (28.47% of total revenue).

However, due to the global pandemic situation of Covid-19, the Indian tourism industry is in shock, and a fall of 74.9% of FTA has been recorded for the year 2020. Simultaneously, Kerala tourism records nosedive of -72.77% where -71.36% of FTA and -72.86% of domestic tourists has been recorded. It shows a direct impact on all relevant development of the region. Due to limitations of insufficient data because of delays in data updates from agencies, the calculation of actual loss is still in progress.

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Survey

For the assessment of public participation in Kochi heritage city, a qualitative survey has been done to determine the diversity of some topics of interest with a given population. The survey is carried out on 44 respondents effectively at Kochi heritage city in July-Sep 2021, and it was performed for a couple of weeks to get appropriate information from the respondents. Table 04 shows the strata of respondents categorised into different groups. Every respondent has been asked for different aspects of public participation in the Kochi region. The questionnaire is designed in such a way that, can cover the dynamics of public participation and their participation interest.

Table 4. Strata of Respondents for the Survey

Types of Respondents		Categories					
Types	No.	Age (years)	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-60	Above 60
Government Employ	04		3	11	17	8	5
Local Leader	06	Gender	Male	Female			
Private service	03		25	19			
Family Head	09	Education level	secondary	Higher second	Tertiary	Non-formal education	
Shop owners	08		3	22	17	2	
Business Providers	05	Employment status	Public	Private	Business	Not Employed	Retired
Retired Person	05		10	7	18	4	5

Professional/ Practitioners	04	
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Source: Author

Table 5. Assessment of Variables in Public Participation (level of transparency-involvement) in Kochi City

Variables (↓)	Level of involvement (→) ; (%age of response)									
	Very low		Low		Moderate		High		Very high	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Information exchange	23	52.27	19	43.18	2	4.54	-	-	-	-
Physical (imageability)	15	34.09	18	40.90	8	18.18	2	4.54	1	2.27
Political structure	9	20.45	20	45.45	14	31.81	1	2.27	-	-
Socio-economy	6	13.63	19	43.18	15	34.09	3	6.81	1	2.27
Cultural stability	8	18.18	17	38.63	16	36.36	2	4.54	1	2.27
Citizen involvement & engagement	23	52.27	17	38.63	3	6.81	1	2.27	-	-
	Σ= 31.81		Σ= 41.66		Σ= 21.96		Σ= 3.40		Σ= 1.13	

NOTE: F= Frequency

Source: Author

Table 5, shows the criticality of indirect variables in public participation, which explains the level of involvement. In the discourse of variable analysis, the information exchange factor is showing very low attention in the case of Kochi; therefore, it needs to increase the action of information exchange during public participation. Further, it assesses the contribution of another factor in participation through their percentage of responses, which suggests the need for more involvement of political structure in public participation. Further, the socio-economy also shows a sharp dip in the level of involvement; therefore, it is also suggested to consider their activities of interest in such participation. Further, imageability, cultural stability and political structure shows a low level of participation. However, the citizen involvement and engagement factor show a very low level of consideration during participation.

Table 6. Assessment of Variables Impact in Public Participation in Kochi City

Variables (↓)	Impact (→) ; (%age of response)									
	Very low		Low		Moderate		High		Very high	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Information exchange	-	-	1	2.27	8	18.18	26	59.09	9	20.45
Physical (imageability)	1	2.27	6	13.63	16	36.36	17	39.63	4	9.09
Political structure	-	-	3	6.81	11	25.00	18	40.90	12	27.27

Socio-economy	-	-	1	2.27	10	22.72	18	40.90	15	34.09
Cultural stability	1	2.27	4	9.09	16	36.36	16	36.36	7	15.90
Citizen involvement & engagement	-	-	-	-	5	11.36	17	38.63	22	50.00
	$\Sigma = 0.76$		$\Sigma = 5.67$		$\Sigma = 24.99$		$\Sigma = 42.58$		$\Sigma = 26.13$	

NOTE: F= Frequency
 Source: Author

Table 6, explains the reliability of variables in public participation, especially for Kochi heritage city. It assesses the impact of factors in such a participatory process, where it shows information exchange have a high level of impact during the regeneration of Kochi city through public participation. The physical imageability of the region shows a moderate impact on participation. Further, the political structure factor has a higher interest of involvement, whereas socio-economy and cultural stability factors show moderate but higher impact in participation in the Kochi heritage region. However, citizen involvement and engagement project a sharp peak during impact assessment. It suggested that for effective public participation citizen involvement and their engagement need to be very high. Therefore, it explains that most of the respondents are strongly agreed with the high range of citizen involvement and engagement in public participation in TrUR.

Findings

Based on the assessment of public participation in tourism-related urban regeneration, specifically in Kochi heritage city, a number of literature based on theories of participation have been reviewed and a qualitative survey has been conducted. Through this survey and review of literature, it is concluded that, due to ignorance of interest of public needs and low consultation, the interest of public participation in such regeneration initiatives is declining. There are several factors that have been identified which has a direct or indirect impact on such public participation.

During the survey, there is a wider acceptance of public participation in tourism-related urban regeneration has been identified especially in relation to creating employment opportunities, improving the physical environment, and enhancing the city image. However, a little inconsistency in its application and effectiveness is observed. The low status of public participation could be traced to both macro and micro forces hindering

the public in a participatory process. Further, it shows that participation in the tourism-related urban regeneration process was heavily influenced by political and economic structure at the macro level, but the individual actors still exercised through personal agency. During public participation in Kochi city, it is identified that, when the urban regeneration process is approaching the point of final decision-making and public comments or interest are not appropriately incorporated or captured in the final decision, such scenario results in passive or non-participation by the public. Therefore, on the survey analysis, the following findings have been recorded-

- Very low level of information exchange, low or absence of public hearing
- Negligence of old city, which leads to a reduction in public participation
- Low consideration of public suggestions in the decision-making process, leads to a reduction in participation interest
- Partial ignorance of local community into policy framework, causes reduced interest of participation
- Irrational distribution of benefits, leads to economic leakage and liquidity
- Uneven and the unfair chance of public involvement and engagement, leads to faith reduction in the partnership programme
- Negligence or ignorance of citizen involvement and engagement in government initiatives causes lower participation interest
- Introduction of the private sector in tourism-related urban regeneration is a major challenge for effective public participation.

Therefore, based on the above findings, it is concluded that a low level of public participation has been emerging as the main issue in public participation effectively. So, there is a need for an effective participation framework, which may help to mitigate the stress of the participation process.

Recommendations

For effective public participation in such tourism-related urban regeneration, it is recommended that the incorporation of assessment through conceptualizing public participation framework in response to policy planning can secure urban regeneration by bringing tourists and employment opportunities for improving the city image. According to the main literature during this research, this study is used to advocate that,

the evaluation should be provided necessary data to understand whether the participation process can improve decision-making and enhance the participatory interest in such regeneration initiatives. Hence, a conceptual framework of public participation has been developed to understand the level of public participation and their assessment in TrUR. Further, on the acknowledgement of both the policy-based and normative goals of effective public participation, the following recommendation has been presented-

- To reduce the stress of participation decline, it is necessary to acknowledge the local population in the decision-making process
- To increase the level of participation, it is suggested to incorporate a better and more effective communication and information exchange system
- For the rise in participation, local consultation at every level of development to be placed
- To uplift the acceptance level, it is necessary to consider public suggestions and community benefits in the policy framework
- To increase the interest of participation, a fair and equal chance of public involvement and their engagement to be incorporated
- To increase the faith in the public to participate, an effective public partnership programme to be introduced
- To stop the economic leakage and fluidity, it is very necessary to even distribution of benefits among stakeholders
- To enhance the participation framework, it is suggested to limit the introduction of private sectors.

Therefore, for effective public participation in such tourism-related urban regeneration processes, an assessment ladder of public participation is needed. It is supported by some interviews in which interviewees admitted that the alleged economic and social impact of public participation in urban regeneration was very difficult to measure in the real world, and their decision-making was based on positive presumptions and expectations. However, these assumptions did not always turn out to be true. Therefore, an assessment ladder of public participation is suggested for sustainable participation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the design of the research, the questionnaire, and the write-up. The on-line survey, data cleaning and tabulation was undertaken by researcher. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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