

## Understanding The Community Participation Based Tourism; - An Approach To Sustainable Tourism.

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### ABSTRACT

The present study is completely a theoretical research work, based on author's observation and experiences. Community-based tourism has now emerged as an alternative to being able to promoting sustainable tourism by directly engaging local communities in tourism development. Community Participation-Based Tourism (CPBT) provides community welfare and community empowerment towards sustainable tourism. This article aims to explore CPBT as a framework for achieving economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability through inclusive, community-driven tourism initiatives. The main purpose of this paper is to examine the problem involved in community-based tourism development; examine strategies that can be done to be sustainable. This research employs a qualitative approach. The basic methodology of this study is secondary data obtained from literature studies, scientific articles, then compiled, analyzed, and concluded. The literature review forms the foundation of the analysis. The research focuses on understanding the interactions between tourism, community participation, and sustainability, offering insights into best practices and strategies for supporting CPBT. The study concludes that CPBT offers a promising pathway to achieving tourism that is sustainable, equitable, and locally driven.

**Keywords:** Community participation, inclusive, sustainable tourism, local empowerment, cultural preservation.

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries throughout the world contributing significantly to economic development. The rapid expansion of tourism has often led to unintended consequences such as environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and economic disparities. In response, the concept of sustainable tourism has gained attention as a way to ensure that tourism development benefits local communities while preserving cultural and natural resources for future generations. Community Participation-Based Tourism (CPBT) has emerged as a crucial strategy in this effort, where the local community plays a central role in planning, decision-making, and managing tourism activities.

This paper examines CPBT as a key to sustainable tourism support by exploring its core principles, benefits, and challenges. The focus is on how involvement of local community people directly helps in tourism activities contributing to sustainable development while addressing the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic dimensions of tourism.

### OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to explore Community Participation-Based Tourism (CPBT) as a mechanism for promoting sustainable tourism. The other objectives of the study are mentioned hereunder:

1. To investigate the role of community participation in achieving the goals of sustainable tourism, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability.
2. To identify the principles guiding successful community-driven tourism initiatives.
3. To analyze the benefits of CPBT for local communities in terms of economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.
4. To examine the challenges and barriers that faced by the communities at the time of implementing CPBT, particularly capacity limitations, financial constraints, and power imbalances.
5. To propose strategies for overcoming these challenges and fostering long-term sustainable tourism development through the participation of community people.
6. To provide policy recommendations in order to support and enhance CPBT initiatives as part of sustainable tourism strategies.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An extensive literature review of previous literature regarding the participation of community people has been made for developing more inclusive models (Timothy, 2007). The concept of community participation in tourism stems from broader discussions on participatory development in the 1980s and 1990s. Pretty (1995) describes participation as involvement, where community members are informed about tourism plans, for their active engagement and where locals take control of decision-making processes. The United Nations World Tourism Organization

(UNWTO) and other global organizations have emphasized the importance of community participation in tourism planning as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Scheyvens (1999) argues that CPBT fosters a sense of local ownership and responsibility which is essential for promoting the long-term sustainability of any tourism projects. Additionally, Ashley & Roe (1998) emphasize the importance of tourism's contribution to local livelihoods and its role in reducing vulnerability in marginalized communities. CPBT has been identified as a powerful tool for economic empowerment particularly in rural and developing regions. By engaging local communities in tourism enterprises CPBT ensures that a greater portion of tourism revenue will remain within the community which reduces the economic leakage. **Spenceley (2008)** and **Zapata et al. (2011)** have documented how CPBT initiatives provide employment opportunities, enhance skills, and generate income for local residents, contributing to poverty reduction and economic resilience. Beyond economic benefits, CPBT strengthens social capital by fostering collaboration and cooperation among community members.

CPBT is closely aligned with ecotourism principles as it encourages communities to protect and manage their natural environments for tourism purposes. By relying on their ecosystems to attract tourists, communities have a vested interest in conserving natural resources, biodiversity, and landscapes (Honey, 2008). Weaver (2012) highlights how CPBT projects have contributed to the creation of community-managed conservation areas, promoting both tourism and environmental sustainability.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study is basically a qualitative approach, drawing from secondary data sources such as academic journals, case studies, reports, and policy documents. The literature review forms the foundation of the present analysis, principles and challenges in CPBT. Several case studies have also consulted to develop the ideas relating to sustainability of CPBT. The study focuses on understanding the interactions between tourism, community participation, and sustainability, offering insights into best practices and strategies for supporting CPBT.

## PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION-BASED TOURISM

According to Sharpley (2000) the basic principle of sustainable tourism development refers to a holistic approach focuses on integrated development both in national and local level. At the same time, different sectors of the tourism industry are developing at various levels adopting environmental policies following the principles of sustainability. An increase in sustainable tourism development policies is highly dependent on a variety of political and economic factors that can hinder the implementation of sustainable tourism development. Community participation is a fundamental aspect of sustainable tourism development, fostering empowerment, ownership, and shared benefits among local residents.

Effective community participation is guided by several key principles that shape its implementation and outcomes. These principles ensure that community involvement is meaningful, inclusive, and conducive to long-term sustainability.

The three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, socio-cultural and environmental are covered separately or collectively for the development of sustainable tourism. World Tourism Organization (WTO) in Pitana (2002) mentioned three principles that must be considered-

- 1) Ecological sustainability. Sustainable tourism development must be supported Sustainability in terms of utilization of natural resources (ecology) as a support.
- 2) Economic sustainability. Sustainability in the economic field is able to benefit local people, tourists, and tourism businesses in the tourist attraction.
- 3) Social and cultural sustainability in the social field, where it is hoped that local communities participate in sustainable development. Cultural sustainability is due to interactions with tourists who have lifestyles, habits and traditions that are different from the local community. Preventive action is needed for cultural distortions owned by local people so that local culture can be protected and sustainable.

## BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION-BASED TOURISM

Community Participation-Based Tourism has several benefits, particularly in terms of its contribution to sustainable development:

### 1. Economic Benefits

- i) **Job Creation and Income Generation:** CPBT provides employment opportunities for local residents in various sectors such as hospitality, handicrafts, transportation, and guiding services.
- ii) **Retention of Economic Benefits:** By promoting locally owned and operated tourism ventures, CPBT ensures that a significant portion of tourism revenues remains within the community.
- iii) **Micro-entrepreneurship:** community-driven Small-scale enterprises like family-run guesthouses, home stay, local food vendors, and artisans can grow under the CPBT model promoting inclusive growth.

## 2. Socio-Cultural Benefits

- i) **Cultural Exchange and Awareness:** CPBT facilitates meaningful cultural exchange between tourists and locals, allowing visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the host community's traditions, beliefs, and lifestyle.
- ii) **Social Cohesion:** Involving communities in tourism decision-making processes can foster greater social cohesion and collective action. This empowerment leads to an increased sense of ownership and pride in local heritage.
- iii) **Preservation of Traditions:** Tourism activities focused on traditional arts, festivals, and indigenous knowledge can contribute to the preservation and revitalization of endangered cultural practices.

## 3. Environmental Benefits

- i) **Sustainable Resource Management:** CPBT encourages environmentally sustainable practices like eco-tourism, wildlife conservation, and the use of renewable resources, minimizing the carbon footprint of tourism activities.
- ii) **Environmental Stewardship:** When local communities are benefited directly from tourism they are more likely to engage in conservation efforts to protect the natural resources that attract tourists, such as forests, wildlife, and clean water sources.

## CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION-BASED TOURISM

The successful implementation of CPBT faces several challenges:

1. **Lack of Skills and Capacity:** Many communities may lack the technical expertise or resources to effectively manage tourism activities. Capacity-building programs, training, and support are necessary to help local residents to acquire the skills needed to operate sustainable tourism ventures.
2. **Financial Constraints:** Initial capital investment is often required to set up community-run tourism initiatives. Limited access to funding, loans, or financial support can hinder the development of infrastructure, marketing, and services needed to attract and retain tourists.
3. **Power Imbalances:** In some cases, there may be power imbalances within communities, where elite groups control decision-making processes and marginalized members are excluded from participating in or benefiting from tourism. This undermines the principle of equitable development.
4. **Environmental Pressures:** While CPBT aims to minimize environmental impacts, a sudden influx of tourists can put pressure on local ecosystems. Over-tourism, even in community-managed settings, can lead to degradation of natural resources if not properly monitored.
5. **Cultural Commodification:** There is a risk that local cultures may be commercialized or altered to suit tourist preferences, leading to the commodification of traditions and practices. This can undermine the authenticity of cultural experiences and disempower local communities.
6. **Over-Tourism:** If not properly managed, CPBT can contribute to environmental degradation and cultural erosion due to excessive tourist numbers.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE CPBT IMPLEMENTATION

To overcome these challenges and promote the growth of sustainable, community-based tourism, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

- **Capacity Building and Education:** Local communities need to be equipped with the skills needed for tourism management, marketing, and environmental stewardship.
- **Financial Support and Incentives:** Governments and international agencies should provide financial support mechanisms, such as grants, microloans, and subsidies, to enable local communities to develop tourism infrastructure and services.
- **Inclusive Governance Models:** Community-based tourism initiatives should adopt inclusive governance models that ensure equitable participation of all community members, including marginalized groups such as women, indigenous peoples, and youth.
- **Environmental Impact Assessments:** Regular environmental monitoring and impact assessments should be carried out to ensure that tourism activities remain sustainable and do not harm local ecosystems.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensuring that all members of the community, particularly marginalized groups, have a voice in tourism planning and management is essential for equitable benefit distribution.
- **Sustainable Tourism Planning:** Managing tourist numbers, developing eco-friendly infrastructure, and implementing conservation practices can help mitigate the negative impacts of over-tourism.
- **Promotion of Authentic Cultural Experiences:** Tourism activities should focus on preserving and celebrating the authenticity of local cultures, rather than altering them to meet tourist expectations. Ethical tourism standards should be developed and enforced to prevent cultural exploitation.

## CONCLUSION

Community Participation-Based Tourism represents a holistic approach to achieving sustainable tourism. By actively involving local communities in tourism development, CPBT not only empowers communities economically but also fosters cultural preservation and environmental conservation. Local people's aspirations are important input in the process of tourism planning and development to be sustainable. Solving the problem of tourism requires the involvement of various decision makers (stakeholders) including the participation of local communities, especially in decision making, implementation of plans and supervision.

However, the success of CPBT depends on addressing key challenges such as capacity building, financial support, and ensuring inclusivity. With the right policies and support mechanisms in place, CPBT can play a crucial role in supporting sustainable tourism and contributing to the broader goals of sustainable development.

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