

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM AND CREATIVE ECONOMY: REPOSITIONING TO STRATEGIES RECOVERY IN POST-COVID ERA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted many sectors and travel and tourism sector is one of the top industry been affected. Moving ahead to manage this impact, around the globe many natural and cultural tourism focus countries are currently in the thinking phase on how to reposition its tourism to destination focused tourism. In this repositing initiative to rebuild the tourism industry, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is observed as one of the promising tourism prospects. Sharma et al.'s resilience-based framework for reviving the tourism industry in post-COVID-19 established in 2021 is proposed to substantiate the understanding of the current CBT management during the pandemic to facilitate resilience and transformation of the tourism in the country. While shedding light on exploring the possibility of repositioning tourism towards CBT with a focus on sustainability, this study also highlighted the prospect of developing 'creative economy' as a contextual approach in CBT. This repositioning strategy based on the development of contextual approach will facilitate destination recovery and add value to the local community's resilience. The study concludes with recommendations to strategies on rebuilding CBT from sustainable tourism context as well as redesigning the CBT initiatives from creative economy perspective to tactically mitigate the recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Community, Tourism, industry, creative, economy, strategy, value

1. BACKGROUND

In recent years before the Covid-19 pandemic, we notice an increase in the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) with the increase number of tourists and sites developed for this tourism. CBT is different from socio-cultural tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism and nature-based tourism. CBT is defined as an alternative form of sustainable tourism development that involves tourism enterprises owned and/or managed by community members with the intent to create and maximize opportunities and benefits for the local community (Curcija et al., 2019; Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020: p.225; Schott and Nhem, 2018). Community-based tourism operate heavily based on local natural and cultural resources. Any tourist plans to experience CBT will need to stay longer in that tourism locations compared to tourists commonly after the sightseeing and technology wonders. The tourists should be present at the site to feel the authentic experience of living in the community and to enjoy the local culture and traditions. This is because the activities tourists engaged in this CBT are destination and local community centric. It is not possible to convey the destination based authentic experience via videos, photos, text or word of mouth. Hence, due to the uniqueness of the CBT it is estimated that CBT will have a better prospect in the post covid era to grow (Noorashid & Chin, 2021; Witker, 2020). Destination centric CBT can play a significant role in attracting tourists to the location. Knowing this potential prospect, some countries have already started to reposition their tourism to focus on CBT and establish tourism when it is safe to travel again. In the South East Asia region, county like Thailand and Brunei are slowly rebuilding its tourism industry towards CBT (Noorashid & Chin, 2021; Witker, 2020)

Community Based Tourism as a Source of Sustainable Development

CBT rather than focusing specifically on nature and culture, it aims to benefit the community and environment as a whole (Treehugger, 2020). CBT is widely acknowledged as tourism that can contribute toward sustainability (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020; Imbaya et al., 2019; Kline et al., 2019). CBT is commonly defined by three characteristics: indigenous leadership, sustainability and cultural immersion (Patwary et al., 2019). The CBT seems to be a good opportunity for the rural and economically struggling communities who usually live below the poverty line. The advantages of these CBT opportunities are usually the economic benefits go directly toward the local families, shared collectively and the benefits stay within the community.

Following are the potential economic and social benefits of community-based tourism:

Economic Benefits

Facilitate local employment – CBT is hugely centric in promoting the local community lifestyle, culture, heritage, diversity, rituals, beliefs and knowledge. Hence local communities play important role in the production and exchange of goods, services and experiences. In the process of providing the service to the tourist, local people can become tourist guides, entrepreneurs, employee and suppliers of goods.

Help diversify the economy – CBT help to reduce the risk of depending on one common source of economy such as farming. Community members if not directly involve in homestays, they may act as guides, provide meals, supply raw materials/goods and be performer artists. CBT is a good source of alternative income in many regional areas that depend on only one source of income.

Facilitate economic shared value – CBT foster to increase the consumption of local products. Wide distributions of benefits for example homestay business can trigger many other small businesses.

Benefits local underdeveloped communities financially – As CBT focus on community networking and collective sharing it can facilitate the development of social enterprise, micro business and family own business and these can drive raise in the social economy.

Social Benefits

Creates and empowers resilient and strong communities – CBT help to empower local communities with skills and training. The uniqueness of CBT that benefits the local community is they are not only trained to plan the tourism activities but they are nurtured to manage the tourism by themselves.

Enhance the social development - The growth in CBT can evidence local infrastructure development such as power, road, sanitation and water. It can also trigger social development such as schools, hospitals and community centres. Such efforts can cause the public to appreciate the benefits of the CBT business in the country.

Female empowerment – CBT creates a new space for women to take on leadership roles. The success of CBT in many countries proved that women can take opportunity to become an entrepreneur and run their own business.

Sustain local culture for future generations – CBT can help the preservation of younger generation in that location to continue to stay in their community instead of seeking job opportunities in cities if they recognise the commercial and social value of their natural heritage and cultural traditions. This can help to foster the conservation of the resources and tradition even further to future generations.

Contributions of CBT can be observed as the source to create jobs, raise incomes, reduce poverty, end hunger, promote healthy lives, achieve gender equality, empower women and vulnerable cohorts, promote wellbeing, improve education quality, provide clean water and sanitation, drive economic growth and reduce inequalities for all at all stages align with the goals listed in the United Nation's SDGs agenda (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020; Imbaya et al., 2019; Kline et al., 2019). In a macro context, this initiative also supports the action taken to combat climate change and its impact, as preserving nature is part of this CBT (Hassan and Ferdaus, 2020). Hence CBT is a very good choice to practice sustainable tourism. In fact, taking further this study claims that the CBT recovery planning after the Covid-19 should be designed to address the SDGs to ensure that community and economy will grow equally in a balance manner.

Creative Economy and Community Based Tourism

Creative economy is defined as the creation of added value based on ideas that are born from the creativity of

human resources (the creative people) and based on science, including cultural and technological heritage (Badan Ekonomi Kreatif – Bekraf, 2016; Mayasari & Chandra, 2020, p. 483). The fundamental source of the creative economy are ideas, intellectual, property, knowledge and technology. Human creativity in this creative economy mainly depends on knowledge-based economic activities and this is expanded as 'creative industries. Studies show that a creative economy can be the source of structural economic transformation, important for socio-economic progress and sustainable human development (Fazlagić & Skikiewicz, 2019; Rismayadi, & Maemunah, 2018). The creative economy has become a popular trend in tourism (Andrea, & Santoso, 2020; Putri et al., 2020). Studies acknowledge that tourism is one of the sectors that maximise the opportunities of the creative economy and excel in a form of creative industries and this trend continues to grow (OECD, 2014). It is designed around giving entertainment, education and imagination. The Global Trends Report shows that more travellers and visitors are adopting sustainable-friendly travel trends and they are hugely supporting small businesses and unique communities (American express, 2021). This trend reflects the emerging prospect for creative economy growth in tourism.

As other tourism, CBT is also focusing on the creative economy (Andrea, & Santoso, 2020; Putri et al., 2020). Tourists in CBT engage actively in the local culture (e.g., food tasting, playing local games, role play in cultural performance). The essential component of a creative economy is a set of social-economic activities that take place in the community networks that are able to generate economic returns. This is highly viable in the tourism context and particularly prospective in CBT as CBT involve multi-actors in the network to perform the economic activities and the benefits are shared collectively such as for cultural performance and storytelling by tourist guides. Creative economy mainly focuses on community's assets such as human, financial social, economic, education, culture, tradition, belief, nature and CBT own all assets extensively. The CBT local operators just need support to nurture the mindset of the diverse mix of people and plan the programs that welcome community-centric creative activities. CBT is able to create many creative economy centric products, services, experiences and markets naturally from a range of activities involving food, dining experience, performance, games, cultural activities, local knowledge activities. CBT can potentially lead the shift from the conventional model of cultural/natural tourism to a new model of creative tourism based on its creative community-centric activities. The creative economy in CBT is important to generate an attractive experience for visitors while is also the driver for attaining sustainability goals for the local community.

The question raised in this study is, how to tap creative economy opportunities in CBT within the aspect of sustainability?

One of the competitive approaches CBT can adopt is to design and develop its tourism business model based on the concept of a creative economy for attaining sustainability. While CBT provides wide opportunities for local communities to involve directly in the production of services and goods, the local communities have huge resources to show their creativity and materialised that as a creative economy. A major strength of the local community operating in the CBT context is their local knowledge. This local knowledge should be operationalised as a learning process to increase the resilience of the people with the local wisdom. Instead of selling the product and experience to the visitors, CBT should take a unique approach of selling 'knowledge of wisdom' to the visitors. Instead of visitors being impressed looking at the culture they should be given the opportunity to engage and involve in the culture. For example, instead of offering community authentic food in the traditional setting, the visitors should be exposed to the process of finding the local food ingredients and preparing/cooking the local food. In order to design and develop the activities, the local community will surely need the help of experts to guide them prepare the activity plan to engage the visitors.

Theoretical Framework and Practical Implications

There is a need to strategically design the CBT surrounding the concept of creative economy with a focus on attaining sustainability for the local community. The unplanned development of CBT and intensive use by tourists could lead to negative effects on the natural environment and the socio-economic development of the specific CBT sites and communities respectively. These effects can create pressure and gradually lead to less preferred interest to grow CBT further. Hence government has to play a very important role to ensure that the CBT is well planned, implemented and monitored to minimise negative impacts of the sector by ensuring the efficient use of natural resources and minimise adverse impacts on the local community while supporting the community and local socio-economy prosperity. The government should directly involve, plan manage and control the CBT activities to bring socio-economic potential benefits to the host community, local environment and the tourist alike.

Successful, responsible and sustainable tourism requires good management to balance the visitor, place and the host community (Europa, 2015).

While in this crisis time, tourism considers the covid pandemic crisis time as rehabilitation time and many countries are thinking about redesigning and repositing their tourism business model (Noorashid & Chin, 2021; Witker, 2020). The direction and focus of the new business model should be planned precisely to shift the point of the product and service to build competitive advantage and add value to the community. Studies in tourism suggested Sharma's resilience-based framework for reviving tourism and developing the post-Covid 19 coping-up mechanisms (Sharma & Thomas, 2021). The model proposed four main factors involved in the process of resilience making that contribute to transformation in tourism after the Covid-19 era (Noorashid, & Chin, 2021) (see Figure 1 below). Based on the extensive literature review studies, the authors identified these factors as significant strategic planning focus for managing tourism in post-Covid-19 era. In the model, the identified three factors for transformation: sustainability tourism, the wellbeing of society and engaging communities are highly relevant and significant in the context of CBT. In this study, we suggest CBT refer Sharma's resilience-based framework for reviving and repositing the CBT to focus on attaining sustainability for local communities by rousing the local knowledge for developing creative economy benefits. The rethinking and the reviving actions taken during the Covid era can mitigate the recovery in post covid phase.

2. CONCLUSION

CBT is desirable tourism for the countries that have the resources to develop CBT. This tourism has the opportunities to meet both the tourists and local communities to create a more sustainable future that benefits both people and the planet. CBT needs to have a clear vision of management strategy. The success of CBT depends on the cooperation between the community members, local government, assistance from non-profits, private funding, partnerships with travel companies, tourism experts including academics. The mindset towards embedding creative economy value can be supported



Figure 1: Resilience-based framework for reviving the tourism industry (Sharma & Thomas, 2021: p.8)

through training and enhanced via the use of technology. The initiatives should aim to diversify more tour packages and utilising local resources and products with the aim to build a competitive advantage. The tourism companies or agents should implement an environmentally friendly development, practice responsible tourism and aim to achieve more sustainable development goals. Effective policies should be created to support the development of the CBT and take advantage of the opportunities to generate a creative economy to add value to tourism and set its sustainable competitive advantage. The basis of CBT for attaining sustainability should be prioritised and efforts should be made to generate creative economy opportunities at the time of Covid to mitigate the recovery in the post-COVID era.

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