

The Role of Community-Based Tourism in Supporting Sustainable Adventure Tourism

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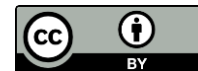
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ABSTRACT

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a strategic approach to promoting sustainable tourism development, particularly in the growing adventure tourism sector. This study situates sustainable adventure tourism within a broader context by highlighting increasing demand for authentic and responsible travel experiences. The purpose of this research is to examine the role of community-based tourism in supporting sustainable adventure tourism and to synthesize existing theoretical and empirical evidence. This study employs a qualitative literature review method, analyzing peer-reviewed articles, books, industry reports, and policy documents related to adventure tourism, CBT, and sustainability. Literature was selected through systematic keyword searches across academic databases and analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and relationships. The findings indicate that CBT contributes to economic empowerment, socio-cultural preservation, and environmental conservation in adventure tourism destinations. Community participation also enhances tourist experiences, destination competitiveness, and sustainable development outcomes. These results imply that policymakers and tourism practitioners should integrate CBT frameworks into adventure tourism planning and management to support inclusive and sustainable destination development. In conclusion, CBT plays a crucial role in advancing sustainable adventure tourism by fostering local empowerment, enhancing experiential authenticity, and promoting responsible tourism practices.



INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry due to increasing demand for experiential and nature-based travel activities (ATTA, 2020). This form of tourism encompasses a wide range of activities that involve physical activity, interaction with natural environments, and cultural immersion, attracting tourists seeking authentic and transformative travel experiences (Buckley, 2016). The global adventure tourism market has demonstrated significant growth driven by rising disposable incomes, changing lifestyle preferences, and increasing interest in outdoor recreational activities (Grand View Research, 2020). Adventure tourism has been recognized not only as an economic driver but also as a catalyst for social and environmental development in destination areas (UNWTO, 2020).

Adventure tourism is often characterized by activities such as trekking, mountaineering, rafting, wildlife tourism, and cultural expeditions that require specialized skills and involve perceived risk and uncertainty (Fennell, 2015). These activities contribute to tourists' psychological well-being, satisfaction, and personal development through challenge and self-discovery (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2017). Adventure tourism experiences are strongly associated with authenticity and meaningful engagement with local cultures and environments, making it distinct from mass tourism (Cohen, 2016). The increasing popularity of adventure tourism has encouraged destination managers and policymakers to develop strategies that integrate sustainability principles into tourism development (Gartner, 2020).

Sustainable tourism has become a central paradigm in tourism research and practice, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity (Mason & Mowforth, 2010). Adventure tourism, in particular, has been highlighted as a sector that requires careful management due to its potential impacts on fragile ecosystems and local communities (Stewart et al., 2020). Sustainable adventure tourism seeks to minimize negative environmental impacts while maximizing socio-economic benefits for host communities (Weaver, 2008). The integration of sustainability principles into adventure tourism development is essential to ensure long-term viability and resilience of destinations (Sharpley & Stone, 2009).

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been widely recognized as an effective approach for promoting sustainable tourism development by empowering local communities and fostering community participation in tourism planning and management (Stronza, 2007). CBT emphasizes local ownership, community participation, and equitable distribution of tourism benefits, thereby enhancing community livelihoods and social capital (Ryan & Gu, 2008). Community involvement in tourism development is crucial for achieving sustainable outcomes and ensuring that tourism benefits are shared among local stakeholders (Smith & Puczkó, 2009). The integration of CBT into adventure tourism can contribute to environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development in destination areas (Higham & Bejder, 2020).

The relationship between adventure tourism and sustainability has been increasingly examined in recent years, with scholars highlighting the importance of responsible tourism practices and stakeholder collaboration (Deb et al., 2023). Adventure tourism destinations often rely heavily



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Vol. 01, No. 1, February 2026

Management and Applied Learning in Local and Adventure Tourism (MALALA)

on natural and cultural resources, making community participation essential for sustainable resource management (Pegram et al., 2020). Local communities play a key role in providing tourism services, guiding adventure activities, and preserving cultural heritage, thereby enhancing the authenticity and quality of tourism experiences (Hudson & Ingram, 2019). The active involvement of communities in adventure tourism development can strengthen destination competitiveness and promote long-term sustainability (Gibson, 2018).

The advent of digital technologies has further transformed tourism development and marketing, influencing tourists' decision-making processes and shaping sustainable tourism practices (Garrod & Gössling, 2021). Destination marketing organizations increasingly rely on digital platforms to promote adventure tourism experiences and engage with tourists worldwide (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2013). Recent global travel trends indicate a growing preference for nature-based, authentic, and sustainable travel experiences, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic (Booking.com, 2021). Tourists are increasingly seeking destinations that offer meaningful interactions with local communities and environmentally responsible tourism practices (Expedia, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the tourism industry, highlighting the need for resilient and sustainable tourism models that prioritize local communities and environmental sustainability (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Crisis and disaster management strategies have become essential components of tourism development, particularly for adventure tourism destinations that operate in remote and high-risk environments (Becken et al., 2021). The pandemic has accelerated the shift towards sustainable and community-oriented tourism models, emphasizing the importance of local participation and adaptive management (UNWTO, 2020). Nature-based adventure tourism has gained renewed attention as tourists seek outdoor activities and low-density destinations in the post-pandemic era (Rosenberg et al., 2021).

Adventure tourism has a long historical foundation, with early explorers and adventurers contributing to the development of adventure travel narratives and tourism practices (Livingstone, 1857). Historical milestones such as the first successful ascent of Mount Everest have shaped the global perception of adventure tourism and inspired generations of travelers (Hillary & Norgay, 1953). Over time, adventure tourism has evolved from exploratory expeditions to a structured tourism sector with commercial operators and standardized activities (Buckley, 2009). The evolution of adventure tourism reflects changing societal values, technological advancements, and increasing demand for experiential travel (Buckley, 2019).

Despite the growing body of literature on adventure tourism and sustainability, research on the integration of Community-Based Tourism within sustainable adventure tourism remains limited (Gross & Sand, 2019). Previous studies have primarily focused on market trends, tourist behavior, and environmental impacts, with less emphasis on community participation and governance structures (Xalxo, 2020). There is a need for comprehensive literature reviews that synthesize existing research on CBT and sustainable adventure tourism to identify research gaps and future research directions (Deb et al., 2023). Understanding the role of community-based tourism in



supporting sustainable adventure tourism is essential for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to promote responsible tourism development (UNWTO, 2020).

Therefore, this study aims to systematically review the literature on Community-Based Tourism and its role in supporting sustainable adventure tourism development. This literature review seeks to explore key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings related to CBT and adventure tourism sustainability. Furthermore, this study identifies research gaps and proposes future research directions to advance knowledge in the field of sustainable adventure tourism. By synthesizing existing literature, this research contributes to the academic discourse on sustainable tourism and provides practical insights for destination managers and community stakeholders.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach to systematically examine the role of Community-Based Tourism in supporting sustainable adventure tourism development. The research procedure involved identifying, selecting, and synthesizing relevant academic publications, reports, and policy documents related to adventure tourism, sustainable tourism, and community-based tourism using reputable databases and institutional sources, including UNWTO, ATTA, and academic journals. The inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and authoritative reports published between 2000 and 2024 that addressed adventure tourism, sustainability, and community participation, while exclusion criteria were applied to non-academic sources and unrelated tourism topics. Data collection was conducted through keyword-based searches such as “adventure tourism,” “sustainable tourism,” and “community-based tourism,” followed by screening titles, abstracts, and full texts to ensure relevance and academic quality. The selected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify key concepts, theoretical frameworks, trends, and research gaps in sustainable adventure tourism and CBT integration. Established theoretical perspectives on adventure tourism, sustainability, and community participation were used to guide the analysis, while recent studies and global tourism reports provided empirical insights into industry trends and sustainability practices. The research process and analytical framework were supported by previous tourism research methodologies and sustainability frameworks to ensure scientific rigor and replicability. All materials and references used in this review are publicly available and can be accessed through the cited sources, with no restrictions on data availability. Ethical approval was not required as this study did not involve human or animal subjects, but relied solely on secondary data from published literature and institutional reports.

RESULTS

1. Motivations and Characteristics of Adventure Tourism

The findings indicate that adventure tourism is driven by tourists’ desire for novel, challenging, and transformative experiences that differ from conventional mass tourism. Adventure



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Vol. 01, No. 1, February 2026

Management and Applied Learning in Local and Adventure Tourism (MALALA)

tourism activities commonly include hiking, trekking, mountain biking, rafting, climbing, wildlife safaris, and cultural expeditions, which provide opportunities for physical challenge and personal fulfillment. Previous studies highlight that adventure tourists are motivated by intrinsic factors such as self-development, exploration, and the pursuit of meaningful experiences. Gibson (2018) reports that adventure travelers seek novelty and personal achievement, while Smith and Puczko (2009) emphasize that adventure tourism enables personal growth and self-discovery. Additionally, nature-based experiences and interactions with local communities are identified as major motivational drivers, with natural landscapes and biodiversity attracting tourists seeking authentic environmental engagement (Buckley, 2012). Cultural immersion also plays a significant role, as adventure tourists value opportunities for cross-cultural learning and interaction with host communities (Ryan & Gu, 2008).

2. Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts of Adventure Tourism

The results demonstrate that adventure tourism generates both positive and negative socio-economic and environmental impacts. On one hand, adventure tourism contributes to economic development by creating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, and generating income for host communities. Fennell (2015) notes that properly managed adventure tourism can support conservation initiatives and enhance local livelihoods through tourism revenue. Moreover, adventure tourism can promote environmental awareness and conservation ethics among tourists, encouraging responsible behavior and support for sustainable practices (Ballantyne et al., 2011). However, the literature also highlights environmental risks, including habitat degradation, wildlife disturbance, and ecosystem vulnerability associated with adventure activities. Higham and Lück (2019) emphasize that fragile ecosystems may be adversely affected by unmanaged adventure tourism operations. Socio-cultural challenges, such as community marginalization and commodification of local cultures, are also reported, particularly when tourism development excludes local participation (Stronza, 2007).

3. Historical Evolution of Adventure Tourism

The findings reveal that adventure tourism has evolved significantly from early exploratory expeditions to modern experiential tourism. Historically, adventure tourism originated from 19th-century exploration activities conducted by pioneers such as Livingstone (1857), followed by mountaineering expeditions such as Hillary and Norgay's ascent of Mount Everest in 1953. Over time, advancements in transportation and communication technologies facilitated the commercialization of adventure tourism activities such as rafting, bungee jumping, and skydiving (Buckley, 2009). In the late 20th century, ecotourism emerged, emphasizing responsible travel and conservation-oriented tourism experiences (Weaver, 2008). Contemporary adventure tourism now incorporates cultural immersion, wellness experiences, and technologically enhanced activities, reflecting evolving traveler expectations and global tourism trends (Cohen, 2016; Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2013; Ryan & Brice-Weller, 2020).



4. Market Trends and Growth of Adventure Tourism

The results indicate that adventure tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry. According to UNWTO (2020), demand for adventure tourism has increased significantly due to tourists' desire for authentic and transformative experiences. Market reports indicate substantial economic growth, with the global adventure tourism market valued at USD 586.3 billion in 2019 and projected to reach USD 1.6 trillion by 2027 (Grand View Research, 2020). Millennials and Generation Z are identified as key market drivers, as they prioritize experiential travel, cultural immersion, and personal development opportunities. Booking.com (2021) and Expedia (2021) report that younger travelers are willing to pay more for meaningful and authentic travel experiences, indicating a shift toward experience-based consumption patterns. These findings highlight that demographic changes and evolving consumer behavior significantly influence adventure tourism growth.

5. Diversity of Adventure Tourism Activities

The findings demonstrate that adventure tourism encompasses a wide range of activities categorized into nature-based, water-based, cultural, and wellness-oriented experiences. Nature-based activities such as trekking, hiking, camping, and wildlife safaris remain fundamental components of adventure tourism, enabling tourists to connect with natural environments (Buckley, 2016). Water-based activities such as rafting, diving, kayaking, and snorkeling provide adrenaline-driven experiences, particularly for thrill-seeking tourists (Small, 2017). Cultural immersion activities, including homestays, culinary tourism, and indigenous community visits, allow tourists to engage with local traditions and social practices, enhancing experiential authenticity (Mason & Mowforth, 2010). Additionally, wellness-oriented adventure tourism, such as yoga retreats and meditation hikes, reflects growing demand for holistic tourism experiences that integrate physical and mental well-being (Ryan & Brice-Weller, 2020).

6. Technological Influence on Adventure Tourism

The results highlight that technological advancements play a critical role in transforming adventure tourism operations and experiences. Digital platforms, mobile applications, wearable devices, and virtual reality technologies enhance booking processes, safety measures, and immersive experiences. Small (2017) reports that digitalization reshapes adventure tourism marketing and delivery, while Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2013) emphasize the importance of technology in destination marketing and experience design. Furthermore, Garrod and Gössling (2021) indicate that virtual and augmented reality technologies influence pre-trip planning and decision-making processes, enabling tourists to preview destinations and activities. These findings suggest that technology is a key enabler of innovation and competitiveness in the adventure tourism industry.



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Vol. 01, No. 1, February 2026

Management and Applied Learning in Local and Adventure Tourism (MALALA)

7. Sustainability Dimensions in Adventure Tourism

The findings confirm that sustainability is a central theme in adventure tourism research and practice. Environmental sustainability involves minimizing ecological impacts through responsible land use, waste management, and conservation initiatives (Higham & Lück, 2019). Socio-cultural sustainability focuses on community empowerment, cultural preservation, and equitable tourism development through community-based tourism initiatives (Ryan & Gu, 2008). Economic sustainability is achieved through employment creation, local business development, and income diversification in destination communities (Fennell, 2015). Certification programs and responsible tourism standards are identified as tools to promote sustainable practices and enhance destination competitiveness (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Education and awareness programs also play a crucial role in encouraging responsible tourist behavior and fostering environmental ethics (Stronza, 2007).

8. Current Trends in Adventure Tourism

The results indicate several emerging trends shaping the adventure tourism industry, including experiential travel, niche market segmentation, technological integration, wellness tourism, and post-pandemic adaptation strategies. Adventure tourism is increasingly diversified into niche segments such as luxury adventure tourism, solo travel, wildlife expeditions, and gastronomic tourism (Buckley, 2016). Tourists increasingly demand authentic and immersive experiences, including storytelling tours, conservation projects, and cultural exchanges (Hudson & Ingram, 2019). Health and wellness-focused adventure tourism is gaining popularity, with activities designed to promote physical and mental well-being (Mason & Mowforth, 2010). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in travel behavior, safety protocols, and destination management strategies, highlighting the importance of crisis management and resilience in tourism operations (Stewart et al., 2020).

9. Future Prospects of Adventure Tourism

The findings suggest that adventure tourism will continue to grow and evolve due to market trends, technological innovation, and sustainability initiatives. Future development will be driven by experiential travel demand, market diversification, and digital transformation (Mason & Mowforth, 2010). Sustainable tourism practices will remain a priority to ensure long-term environmental and socio-cultural viability of destinations (Stewart et al., 2020). Changes in consumer behavior, demographic shifts, and global events will influence tourism product development and marketing strategies (Ryan & Gu, 2008). Furthermore, interdisciplinary research, technological advancements, and personalized tourism experiences are expected to shape future adventure tourism research and industry practices (Gross & Sand, 2019).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into the role of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in supporting sustainable adventure tourism development. This discussion



interprets the results in relation to previous studies and theoretical perspectives, while also highlighting broader implications and directions for future research.

First, the results confirm that adventure tourism is primarily driven by tourists' motivations for novelty, personal challenge, and immersive experiences in natural and cultural settings. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that adventure tourists seek authentic and transformative experiences that foster self-development and personal growth (Gibson, 2018; Smith & Puczkó, 2009). The integration of community-based tourism enhances these experiences by facilitating meaningful interactions between tourists and local residents, thereby increasing experiential authenticity and satisfaction. This supports the experiential tourism theory, which emphasizes the importance of emotional and participatory experiences in contemporary tourism consumption (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Second, the socio-economic and environmental impacts identified in this study align with the sustainable tourism framework that emphasizes the triple bottom line of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability (Fennell, 2015). Community-based tourism contributes to local economic development through employment generation, income diversification, and support for local enterprises. This finding is consistent with Stronza (2007), who argued that CBT can empower local communities and enhance socio-economic resilience. However, the study also highlights potential environmental and socio-cultural risks associated with adventure tourism, such as ecosystem degradation and cultural commodification. These findings reinforce the need for responsible tourism management and community participation to mitigate negative impacts (Higham & Lück, 2019).

Third, the historical evolution of adventure tourism demonstrates a transition from exploratory travel to commercially organized experiential tourism. This evolution reflects broader changes in tourism demand, technological development, and global mobility patterns (Buckley, 2009; Weaver, 2008). The incorporation of CBT into adventure tourism represents a paradigm shift toward participatory and inclusive tourism development models, aligning with sustainable development goals and community empowerment principles. This supports the stakeholder theory in tourism, which emphasizes the importance of involving local stakeholders in tourism planning and decision-making processes (Freeman, 1984; Ryan & Gu, 2008).

Fourth, the market trends identified in this study indicate that adventure tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, driven by experiential travel demand, demographic shifts, and digitalization. Millennials and Generation Z tourists increasingly prefer authentic, sustainable, and experience-based travel, which aligns with the findings of UNWTO (2020) and Grand View Research (2020). Community-based adventure tourism products have significant potential to capture this market segment by offering culturally immersive and environmentally responsible experiences. This supports consumer behavior theories that emphasize value co-creation and experiential consumption in tourism (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Fifth, the diversity of adventure tourism activities identified in the results demonstrates the multidimensional nature of adventure tourism, encompassing nature-based, water-based, cultural,



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Vol. 01, No. 1, February 2026

Management and Applied Learning in Local and Adventure Tourism (MALALA)

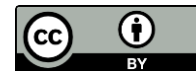
and wellness-oriented experiences. Community-based tourism plays a crucial role in diversifying adventure tourism products by incorporating local knowledge, traditions, and cultural practices into tourism activities. This finding supports previous research that highlights the importance of product diversification and innovation in enhancing destination competitiveness (Hudson & Ingram, 2019).

Sixth, technological advancements are shown to significantly influence adventure tourism development through digital platforms, mobile applications, and immersive technologies. These technologies enhance safety, accessibility, and marketing effectiveness, thereby improving tourist experiences and destination competitiveness (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2013; Small, 2017). Community-based tourism initiatives can leverage digital tools to promote local products, connect with global markets, and improve operational efficiency. This finding aligns with smart tourism and digital tourism transformation theories, which emphasize the role of technology in enhancing tourism service delivery and experience design (Garrod & Gössling, 2021).

Seventh, sustainability emerges as a central theme in adventure tourism development, particularly in the context of environmental conservation, socio-cultural preservation, and economic resilience. The integration of CBT into adventure tourism contributes to sustainable destination development by empowering local communities, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting responsible tourism practices. This finding is consistent with sustainable tourism development theories and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goals related to sustainable communities, decent work, and responsible consumption and production (UNWTO, 2020).

Furthermore, the emerging trends identified in this study, such as experiential travel, wellness tourism, niche market segmentation, and post-pandemic adaptation strategies, indicate that adventure tourism is evolving toward more personalized, sustainable, and technology-driven experiences. Community-based tourism is well-positioned to address these trends by offering authentic and socially responsible tourism products that meet evolving traveler expectations. This supports innovation diffusion theory, which suggests that tourism destinations must continuously innovate to maintain competitiveness in dynamic markets (Rogers, 2003).

In terms of future prospects, the findings suggest that adventure tourism will continue to grow due to increasing demand for experiential travel, technological innovation, and sustainability initiatives. Community-based tourism will play a critical role in ensuring that adventure tourism development benefits local communities and contributes to long-term destination sustainability. However, future research should explore empirical evidence on the effectiveness of CBT in adventure tourism contexts, particularly in developing countries and rural destinations. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term socio-economic and environmental impacts of CBT-based adventure tourism. Additionally, future research should examine the role of digital technologies in empowering local communities and enhancing CBT-based tourism marketing and management. Comparative studies across different geographical regions and cultural contexts would also provide valuable insights into best practices and policy implications for sustainable adventure tourism development.



Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature by synthesizing current knowledge on the role of community-based tourism in supporting sustainable adventure tourism. The findings highlight the importance of integrating community participation, technological innovation, and sustainability principles in adventure tourism development to achieve inclusive and resilient tourism destinations.

CONCLUSIONS

Adventure tourism is expected to experience substantial expansion and evolution in the coming years, influenced by shifting tourist preferences, technological progress, and new developments within the global travel sector. As discussed in the literature review, multiple determinants are likely to influence the future direction of adventure tourism development.

First, the increasing popularity of experiential travel and specialized adventure niches is anticipated to stimulate demand for genuine and immersive travel experiences that enable tourists to engage closely with natural environments, local cultures, and host communities. Mason and Mowforth (2010) highlight that meaningful and authentic experiences are critical in attracting contemporary travelers, while Hudson and Ingram (2019) suggest that destination diversification strategies can generate new opportunities for adventure tourism growth.

Second, technological innovation is expected to remain a key driver in improving safety, accessibility, and immersive adventure experiences. Digital tools such as mobile applications, virtual reality technologies, and wearable devices are transforming how adventure tourism activities are delivered and promoted. Small (2017) discusses how digital advancements are reshaping adventure tourism and predicts the increasing integration of technology into tourism experiences.

Third, sustainability and responsible tourism practices are becoming increasingly central to the future of adventure tourism. Stewart et al. (2020) emphasize that sustainable tourism development is essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of adventure tourism destinations while reducing adverse environmental and socio-cultural impacts. As tourists become more environmentally and socially aware, tourism operators and destination managers are required to prioritize sustainability in order to maintain market competitiveness.

Finally, evolving consumer behavior driven by demographic and socio-cultural changes will influence demand for a wide range of adventure tourism products tailored to different market segments. Ryan and Gu (2008) examine changing travel preferences across various demographic groups, including millennials and older travelers, and stress the importance of developing adventure tourism products and marketing strategies that address diverse tourist profiles.

Overall, the future of adventure tourism presents significant opportunities for continued growth and innovation, supported by market dynamics, technological advancements, and sustainability initiatives. By addressing emerging challenges and leveraging these opportunities, stakeholders in adventure tourism can foster sustainable destination development while delivering meaningful and transformative travel experiences for tourists.

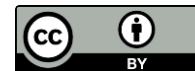


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Vol. 01, No. 1, February 2026

Management and Applied Learning in Local and Adventure Tourism (MALALA)

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