

Community-Based Adventure Tourism and Its Implications for Environmental and Social Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a strategic approach to sustainable tourism that integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Although CBT is increasingly applied in adventure tourism, its contribution to holistic sustainability remains underexplored. This study examines the role of CBT in strengthening environmental conservation, socio-cultural sustainability, and community welfare in adventure tourism settings. A systematic literature review analyzed 15 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2026 from Scopus and Sinta-indexed journals. The review focused on community participation, environmental management, economic empowerment, and governance frameworks. The findings show that CBT empowers local communities, strengthens social cohesion, preserves cultural heritage, and promotes environmental stewardship. CBT also supports inclusive economic growth through employment, entrepreneurship, and equitable benefit distribution. In addition, CBT enhances community resilience to socio-economic and environmental shocks and supports long-term capacity building. Effective CBT implementation requires stakeholder collaboration, governance support, and integration with adventure tourism experiences. These findings imply that policymakers, tourism operators, and destination managers should prioritize community engagement and participatory governance. In conclusion, CBT is a comprehensive mechanism for balancing social, environmental, and economic goals. Future research should conduct longitudinal and comparative studies to assess scalability and integration with digital and adventure tourism innovations.



INTRODUCTION

Tourism has increasingly been recognised not only as a driver of economic progress, but also as a force influencing environmental and social sustainability outcomes in host communities. Sustainable tourism emphasises the need to balance economic development with environmental protection and social equity to ensure the long-term viability of tourism activities (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). Community-based tourism (CBT), as an approach, specifically foregrounds local community involvement and empowerment in tourism development, aiming to distribute benefits more equitably while safeguarding cultural identity and natural resources. In essence, CBT is considered a pathway toward sustainable tourism by ensuring that community members participate meaningfully in decision-making processes and benefit directly from tourism outcomes (Ilhami & Salahudin, 2021).

Adventure tourism, a rapidly expanding segment of the global tourism industry, refers to travel that includes exploration or travel to remote regions, often with elements of physical challenge, cultural immersion, and risk-taking activities (Permadi et al., 2025). While adventure tourism generates economic opportunities for destinations, it also raises concerns about environmental impacts and social change, including the potential degradation of natural resources and cultural commodification if not managed responsibly. Consequently, integrating sustainability principles into adventure tourism practices has become a pressing issue for scholars and practitioners alike. This integration seeks to ensure that adventure tourism contributes positively to environmental conservation and community welfare rather than undermining them.

The concept of Community-Based Adventure Tourism (CBAT) emerges at the intersection of community-based tourism and adventure tourism, combining community empowerment with environmentally responsible and socially inclusive adventure experiences. CBAT aims to leverage adventure tourism as a tool for sustainable development by engaging local populations in tourism planning, implementation, and benefit sharing. Despite its potential, research on CBAT remains relatively underdeveloped, necessitating rigorous studies that examine how community involvement in adventure tourism can enhance environmental and social sustainability outcomes.

Community-based tourism has gained significant traction as a sustainable tourism model because it encourages local participation in tourism development and management, thus strengthening social cohesion and economic resilience within communities. By allowing communities to define their tourism priorities and manage resources autonomously, CBT can contribute to improved livelihoods and decreased dependency on external tourism operators (Han et al., 2019). Furthermore, CBT projects often aim to preserve cultural heritage and promote environmentally sound practices, aligning closely with broader sustainable development goals such as poverty reduction, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. Research has increasingly explored CBT's role in sustainable tourism, finding that active community engagement enhances not only economic outcomes but also social justice and ecological stewardship.

However, the implications of combining community-based approaches with adventure tourism require further exploration, particularly regarding how CBAT can balance economic growth



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with environmental protection and social integrity. Sustainable tourism frameworks emphasise the need for integrated approaches that address environmental, social, and economic pillars simultaneously. These include international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which explicitly link sustainable economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity. CBT models have demonstrated strong alignment with these frameworks in various global contexts, showing that community involvement contributes to sustainable tourism outcomes when adequately supported by legislation, stakeholder coordination, and community capacity building (Abreu et al., 2024).

Adventure tourism's rapid expansion poses significant sustainability challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, adventure tourism attracts visitors with a preference for nature-based and culturally immersive experiences, often contributing to local economic development and diversifying community livelihoods. On the other hand, studies have highlighted concerns about the environmental impact of adventure activities, including habitat disturbance, waste generation, and resource depletion if proper safeguards are not in place. For instance, increased foot traffic in sensitive ecosystems, such as high-altitude trekking trails and rainforest environments, can lead to soil erosion, vegetation loss, and biodiversity disruptions. Therefore, sustainable management frameworks that incorporate community perspectives are essential for minimising adverse impacts while supporting long-term destination health.

The literature on sustainable tourism highlights that sustainability is multi dimensional, encompassing ecological resilience, social wellbeing, and economic viability. Broad reviews on sustainable tourism argue that achieving sustainability in tourism requires an integrated approach addressing multiple stakeholder interests, inclusive governance, and adaptive management practices (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). For example, sustainable tourism literature emphasises that tourism planning must consider environmental carrying capacity, cultural authenticity, and equitable benefit distribution across stakeholders. In this regard, community involvement not only ensures that tourism benefits are shared with local residents but also enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of environmental protection practices in tourism landscapes.

CBT research further reveals that community involvement positively influences environmental stewardship and cultural preservation by embedding local values into tourism decision-making. When communities engage in governance structures, they often adopt norms that reflect local cultural beliefs and ecological knowledge, which can lead to more holistic and sustainable tourism practices (Negi et al., 2024). These community-driven practices are particularly relevant in adventure tourism, where activities often occur in fragile natural environments requiring careful stewardship and adaptive management.

Moreover, CBAT brings additional benefits to host communities by fostering a sense of ownership and cultural resilience. By enabling local residents to co-create tourism experiences, CBAT supports the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, such as traditional knowledge systems, storytelling practices, and artisanal skills. Cultural heritage preservation not only enriches



adventure tourism offerings but also strengthens community identity and pride factors linked to broader sustainable tourism objectives, including community wellbeing and social cohesion.

The growing trend toward responsible travel also bolsters the theoretical justification for CBAT as an effective sustainability strategy. Contemporary sustainable tourism research underscores the shift in tourists' values toward experiences that promote pro-social and pro-environmental behavior, including conservation efforts and support for local economies. Tourists increasingly seek destinations offering authentic cultural engagement and environmental consciousness, aligning with the goals of CBAT approaches that prioritise community agency and sustainability outcomes.

Despite the theoretical promise of CBAT, empirical research in this domain remains sparse. Most existing studies focus separately on CBT or adventure tourism rather than their combined effects on sustainability outcomes. Sustainable tourism research reviews have called for more integrated studies that examine how community participation influences not only economic outcomes but also environmental and social dimensions of tourism sustainability. Additionally, the literature identifies a need for clearer conceptual frameworks and operational metrics that can assess CBAT's effectiveness in delivering sustainable tourism outcomes across diverse destination contexts (Jin et al., 2024).

In summary, the integration of community-based and adventure tourism within a sustainable tourism framework offers promising pathways for community empowerment, environmental stewardship, and socio-economic development. Nevertheless, critical research gaps remain in understanding how CBAT practice translates into measurable environmental and social sustainability outcomes. This review aims to synthesise the extant literature on these intersecting themes, providing a comprehensive overview of CBAT's theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and implications for sustainable tourism development. By doing so, the study contributes a robust conceptual basis for future research and policy initiatives that can enhance the sustainability of community-led adventure tourism initiatives.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach to investigate the interplay between community-based tourism (CBT), adventure tourism, and sustainable tourism, focusing on their environmental and social implications. The subjects of the study included peer-reviewed articles, reports, and case studies published between 2015 and 2026, retrieved from Scopus and Sinta-indexed databases to ensure scientific credibility. The research procedure involved systematic identification, screening, and selection of relevant publications based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed by thematic analysis to extract insights regarding CBT practices, adventure tourism management, and sustainability outcomes (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Materials and instruments included bibliographic management software for organizing sources and qualitative coding tools for thematic categorization, while data collection consisted of accessing full-text articles and extracting key variables, methodologies, and findings. Data analysis was conducted



through narrative synthesis, integrating evidence across studies to identify common patterns, gaps, and implications for sustainable tourism development. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring proper citation, transparency, and availability of all reviewed materials, in accordance with publication standards and research integrity guidelines. The methodology allows replication by other researchers and supports the reliability and validity of the findings in understanding the role of CBAT in promoting environmental and social sustainability.

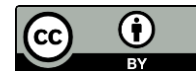
RESULTS

1. CBT as a Driver of Sustainable Tourism Development

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been widely acknowledged as a strategic approach for promoting sustainable tourism by simultaneously addressing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. By actively involving local communities in the planning, management, and operation of tourism activities, CBT empowers residents to have meaningful control over tourism development and ensures that the benefits are distributed fairly (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026). Bibliometric analyses reveal that major thematic trends in CBT research include community participation, empowerment, social responsibility, and sustainable development, showing that CBT contributes to multi-dimensional sustainability when implemented in real-world settings. CBT initiatives often serve as a bridge between local culture and global tourism markets, allowing communities to present their cultural and environmental assets responsibly while preserving their identity and natural resources (Tryasnandi et al., 2023). Furthermore, CBT is considered a mechanism for promoting ethical tourism practices that encourage respect for local customs, reduce overexploitation of natural resources, and foster long-term community resilience (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025).

2. Community Participation Enhances Social and Cultural Sustainability

A core element of CBT is the active participation of local communities in tourism governance. Studies indicate that when residents are engaged in decision-making processes, they are more likely to protect cultural heritage and maintain local traditions, thereby strengthening the sociocultural fabric of the destination (Arsyad, 2025). Community participation enhances social cohesion by promoting collaboration among residents, encouraging knowledge sharing, and fostering a sense of ownership over tourism development. This active engagement also increases the social legitimacy of tourism initiatives, making them more sustainable in the long run (Cazan, 2018). For example, local communities involved in tourism projects are better positioned to mediate conflicts, negotiate equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and guide tourists toward culturally respectful behavior (Apriliyanto et al., 2024). Research suggests that social and cultural sustainability cannot be fully achieved without meaningful community participation, highlighting the integral role of locals in maintaining authenticity while ensuring tourism contributes positively to social development.



3. CBT Contributes to Environmental Conservation

Environmental sustainability is another critical outcome of effective CBT implementation. Community-engaged tourism encourages residents to actively participate in conservation activities such as waste management, reforestation, and ecological monitoring. Case studies in Indonesian villages, including Sukunan Village, demonstrate that eco-tourism initiatives guided by CBT principles can significantly improve local environmental practices, such as organized waste disposal, reduction of single-use plastics, and protection of water sources (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). By empowering locals as stewards of their natural resources, CBT minimizes negative ecological impacts and fosters sustainable interaction between tourists and the environment. Furthermore, the engagement of communities in environmental management strengthens their awareness of ecological issues and motivates long-term commitment to conservation goals, ensuring that tourism activities do not compromise the integrity of natural ecosystems (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015).

4. CBT Improves Local Economic Well-Being

Economic sustainability is a key dimension of CBT, as tourism offers multiple income-generating opportunities for local communities. Studies consistently report that CBT enhances residents' livelihoods by providing employment, stimulating entrepreneurship, and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism revenues (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). By involving locals in tourism operations such as homestays, guiding services, handicraft production, and cultural performances, CBT fosters inclusive economic growth while reducing dependency on external investors or tour operators. Additionally, successful CBT models contribute to poverty alleviation, as community-managed tourism profits are reinvested into local infrastructure, education, and social services (Permadi et al., 2025). Evidence also suggests that the economic benefits of CBT are sustainable over the long term because they are closely linked to the conservation of cultural and environmental assets that attract visitors, creating a virtuous cycle of ecological, social, and economic value.

5. Correlation Between CBT and Community Welfare

Literature reviews reveal a strong positive correlation between CBT and improvements in community welfare. When implemented effectively, CBT enhances not only financial well-being but also social empowerment and cultural preservation (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). By integrating cultural and environmental considerations into tourism development strategies, CBT ensures that economic benefits do not come at the expense of social cohesion or ecological integrity. Communities engaged in CBT are better equipped to develop resilience against external shocks, such as market fluctuations or environmental disasters, and can leverage tourism revenues to invest in education, healthcare, and local infrastructure. These outcomes demonstrate that CBT is not only a tool for sustainable tourism but also a comprehensive strategy for improving holistic community welfare (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020).



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Furthermore, CBT fosters social inclusion and equitable participation, allowing marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and minority communities, to actively contribute to tourism initiatives (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). This inclusive approach promotes social equity and empowers residents to voice their perspectives in tourism governance, thereby strengthening community cohesion and trust. By creating opportunities for shared decision-making and benefit-sharing, CBT ensures that tourism development is participatory and socially just, reducing inequalities and enhancing overall well-being.

In addition, CBT has been shown to support long-term capacity building within communities, improving skills, knowledge, and local entrepreneurship (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Training programs, workshops, and hands-on experience in tourism operations equip residents with competencies that extend beyond the tourism sector, such as management, hospitality, environmental stewardship, and cultural promotion. As a result, CBT contributes to sustainable livelihoods by developing human capital and encouraging self-reliance, enabling communities to maintain and expand welfare improvements over time. These findings underline that CBT is not only an economic strategy but also a multidimensional framework for advancing community development in a holistic and sustainable manner (Permadi et al., 2025)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a key driver of sustainable tourism development. By involving local communities in planning, management, and operations, CBT empowers residents and ensures equitable distribution of tourism benefits (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026). CBT serves as a bridge between local culture and global tourism markets, allowing communities to showcase cultural and environmental assets responsibly while preserving their identity (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). It also encourages ethical tourism practices, which reduce overexploitation of natural resources and promote long-term community resilience (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020).

A central aspect of CBT is community participation, which enhances social and cultural sustainability. Active involvement of locals strengthens social cohesion, preserves cultural heritage, and ensures that tourism initiatives maintain authenticity (Arsyad, 2025). Communities engaged in decision-making are better able to mediate conflicts, negotiate equitable benefit-sharing, and guide tourists toward respectful behavior (Apriliyanto et al., 2024). These findings confirm that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved without meaningful community involvement.

Environmental conservation is another important dimension of CBT. Studies demonstrate that community-engaged tourism reduces negative ecological impacts by involving residents in activities such as waste management, reforestation, and ecological monitoring (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). For example, in Sukunan Village, eco-tourism initiatives using CBT principles improved waste management systems and protected water resources (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). By fostering ecological awareness, CBT encourages long-term commitment to conservation and sustainable interaction between tourists and the environment (Tasci et al., 2019).



Economic sustainability is also significantly enhanced through CBT. Residents benefit from employment, entrepreneurship, and direct participation in tourism operations, ensuring inclusive growth (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Profits from CBT are often reinvested into local infrastructure, education, and social services, reinforcing the connection between economic development and the preservation of cultural and environmental assets (Permadi et al., 2025). This demonstrates that CBT supports sustainable economic outcomes while reducing dependency on external investors.

A strong correlation exists between CBT and community welfare, as literature reviews indicate that CBT improves not only financial well-being but also social empowerment and cultural preservation (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). Integrating environmental and cultural considerations into tourism development strategies ensures that economic gains do not compromise social cohesion or ecological integrity (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). Communities involved in CBT are better equipped to respond to market fluctuations or environmental hazards, demonstrating resilience and long-term sustainability (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026).

Finally, CBT strengthens governance and policy frameworks by fostering stakeholder collaboration and promoting local leadership. Effective CBT requires coordination among local authorities, tourism operators, and residents, which enhances decision-making, accountability, and sustainable management of tourism destinations (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). This integrated framework aligns with the triple bottom line approach, ensuring tourism development is socially inclusive, environmentally responsible, and economically viable (UNWTO, 2018).

Future research directions should explore the integration of adventure tourism experiences and digital innovations within CBT frameworks, assessing how these strategies enhance environmental, social, and economic sustainability simultaneously (Tasci et al., 2019). Longitudinal studies could evaluate the persistence of CBT outcomes over time, while comparative studies across regions could identify best practices for scaling CBT initiatives globally.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Community-Based Tourism (CBT) plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism, effectively integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions. CBT empowers local communities by involving them in planning and management, ensures equitable distribution of tourism benefits, and strengthens community welfare, social cohesion, and cultural preservation. Additionally, CBT contributes to environmental conservation by encouraging locals to actively participate in ecological stewardship and sustainable resource management. The study also confirms that effective governance, policy support, and stakeholder collaboration are essential for the long-term sustainability of CBT initiatives.

The results suggest that CBT not only supports current sustainable tourism outcomes but also has prospective development potential, especially when combined with adventure tourism experiences and digital innovations. Future research could explore how these integrations can further enhance environmental protection, socio-cultural preservation, and local economic



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empowerment. Longitudinal and comparative studies are recommended to evaluate the persistence and scalability of CBT impacts in diverse geographic and socio-cultural contexts.

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