



The Role of Community-Based Tourism in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: A Study on the Dukpa Community of Alipurduar District, India

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Abstract:

Purpose: Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is an approach for sustainable tourism development. CBT can help to bring economic prosperity, conservation of the environment, and preservation of cultural heritage. This paper analyses the development of community-based tourism can play a crucial role for the cultural heritage conservation of Dukpa community in Alipurduar district, India.

Methods: Data have been collected both by Qualitative and Quantitative methods. Qualitative method includes observation and interview, whereas Quantitative methods applied in this study comprise Mean, Pearson correlation, and Independent sample t-test. The study has been conducted on 176 sample population on the basis of purposive sampling by using a structured questionnaire.

Results: The findings indicate that community-based tourism is positively correlated with cultural heritage conservation. The results show that there are statistically significant differences in residents' perceptions of CBT development in terms of gender, age, education, and income. Also, the level of education and monthly income of the respondents influence the conservation of cultural heritage.

Conclusions: The study concludes with the fact that CBT can contribute significantly to the conservation of cultural heritage and enhance the standard of living by generating employment opportunities from tourism activities.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism, Conservation, Cultural Heritage, Dukpa Community

1. INTRODUCTION:

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is a tourism activity, which is owned, operated and managed by the community. It contributes to the well-being of communities by supporting their sustainable livelihoods and protecting natural, cultural resources and valued socio-cultural traditions [1]. Community-based tourism promotes a bottom-up approach, which means tourism development will be developed from the potential resources available within the community and their surroundings [2]. CBT has many socio-cultural benefits, like promotion of community pride, cross-cultural learning, preservation of native culture and human dignity [3]. In the 1980s, CBT was emerged as a response to the problems related to mass tourism and sustainability issues [4]. Simultaneously, it was developed with an aim for local area development, poverty alleviation and natural and cultural resource management. Cultural heritage includes artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and have social significance [5]. This type of tourism signifies amicable guest-host interaction by meaningful participation of both and generates economic and conservation benefits for local communities and environment [6]. Therefore, the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community [7, 8, 9] such as co-operatives, joint-venture community associations, business, local employment, or a variety of entrepreneurs starting up or operating small and medium-sized works in the tourism industry [9, 10, 11]. But, CBT does not only promote economic development of the community but also help to conserve natural and cultural resources of an area with the help of the local community [12, 13, 14].



The Buxa Hill Forest village is primary attractions of Alipurduar district, West Bengal, India.. Mass tourism has an adverse impact on the tourist destination because of increasing tourist arrival. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been emphasized as an alternative to overcome the problems of mass tourism, that helps to sustain the natural environment, brings socio-cultural and economic benefits to the local communities. CBT contributes the preservation and promotion of unique culture and heritage of an area with opportunities for the tourists to learn about the traditional culture, indigenous practices, and unique history of an area. Similarly, host communities get a platform to interact with people other than their communities which in many cases help them to know tourists' behavior that further help for their own CBT development. The Dukpa community is popular for their cultural uniqueness and the rural environment which have ensured the establishment of CBT at their place of habitation.

2. HYPOTHESIS

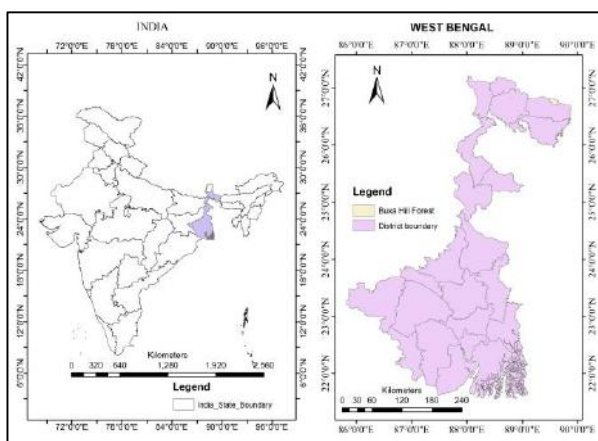
- a) H₁: There is a significant relationship between CBT and cultural heritage conservation.
- b) H₁: There is a significant mean difference between CBT development and cultural heritage conservation in terms of gender, age, education, and income.

3. OBJECTIVE

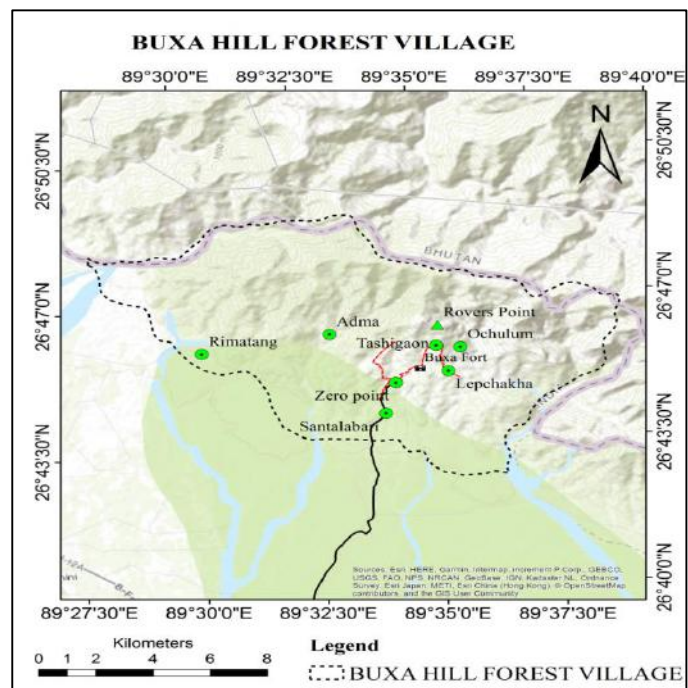
- To find out the role of CBT on the cultural heritage conservation of Dukpa community.

4. ABOUT THE STUDY AREA

Dukpa community in the study area has been living in Buxa Hill forest area in Alipurduar district of West Bengal, India having latitudinal and longitudinal extension of 89°29'0" E to 89°40'0" E and 26°43'0" N to 26°49'0" N respectively. The route towards their places of residence is not easy, rather there is a trekking route of 5 km from a place named Santalabari and from Santalabari to Alipurduar, and there is a metalled road of 35 km. The area is characterized by dense forest and undulating topography which is also a part of tourist attraction. The study area comprises of 11662.98 hectare of land, of which 889.32 comes under forest, 339.57 hectare is irrigated land and 10434.09 hectare is non irrigated area. The total population of the study area is 2889, out of which 97% population is Scheduled Tribe, 3% is non-tribal population , 51 % people are literate, the monthly income of 96% is < Rupee 5000, and 90 % people are the causal labourer [15]



Source: Location map of the study area (Prepared by Researcher using ArcGIS)



5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study has been carried out by descriptive research method. Data has been collected through both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative techniques applied include the observation method that has been completed by non-participant observation where the researcher was not involved directly but acted as an independent observer of the



community activities [16, 17]. The non-participant observation technique has been employed to understand the tangible and intangible culture of the Dukpa community such as hospitality, rituals, festivals, costumes, activities, and traditional cuisine. The observation results have been presented in the form of a description and photographs. Quantitative method includes the questionnaire survey to understand the attitude of the community members regarding CBT development and conservation of their cultural heritage.

A total of 176 Dukpa people consisting of 94 males and 84 females have been selected for the study by using the Yamane formula (1967) [17] with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. This study is based on both primary and secondary data, where purposive sampling technique has been applied with a self-designed structured questionnaire for the survey. 17 items have been selected for the CBT development and personal participation. Similarly, 15 items have been selected for the conservation of cultural heritage. Five-point likert scale has been employed to evaluate their perception to understand the community-based tourism development in that area along with their attitude towards their cultural heritage conservation through CBT in the study area [18]. The secondary data has been collected from Socio Economic and Caste Census. During data collection, all respondents have been informed about the purpose of the study. Oral as well as written consents have been taken from the participants and confidentiality of the information has been assured. Few of them denied written consent due to unknown reasons.

Collected data have been analyzed in SPSS version 20 software. Descriptive statistics used in this study includes frequency and percentages for showing respondents' demographics; mean, and standard deviation for understanding CBT development and personal participation. Pearson correlation coefficient has been calculated to know the relationship between development of CBT and cultural heritage conservation. Independent sample t-Test measures the mean difference in terms of socio-demographic variables.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Year	International	Domestic
2013-2014	35	46,900
2014-2015	34	50,900
2015-2016	29	73,906
2016-2017	73	83,922
2017-2018	121	61,367
2018-2019	43	67,707

Source: Office of Deputy Field Director of BTR East Division

Table 1 shows the annual tourist arrivals at Buxa Hill Forest from 2013 to 2019. The highest number of international tourists (121) arrived in 2017-2018. There is also an increase in the number of domestic tourist arrival from 2013-2014 to 2018-2019. The highest number of domestic tourists (83,922 persons) arrived in 2016-2017.

6.1. Development of CBT and individual participation

Table 2. Residents' perception for the development of CBT and individual participation

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Organization and participation in the cultural events and festivals	4.09	0.69
Support of native people for CBT development	3.93	0.87
Necessary supports for the development of CBT are required	3.93	0.82
CBT will promote local cultural heritage , alleviate poverty and bring sustainable economic and environmental development	3.83	0.85
Interest to participate in CBT planning and implementation	3.81	0.97
Development of CBT at Individual's residence	3.81	0.95
Involvement in the tourism decision making policies for CBT development	3.79	0.99
CBT will provide more jobs for local people	3.73	0.92
Presence of CBT authority or planner at community level	3.68	0.90



CBT will provide entrepreneurial opportunities for local people	3.67	0.91
Community potential as CBT tourist destination	3.66	0.83
CBT will provide environmental education training to local people	3.66	1.00
CBT will help to increase the standard of living of the community	3.61	0.96
The quality of public services shall get improved for CBT development	3.59	0.90
Local Government encourages the community to participate in CBT development	3.55	0.89
CBT fosters intercultural understanding and respect to the other cultures	3.38	0.95
Local Government/NGOs encourage community members for the establishment of CBT	3.35	0.97

Source: Primary Survey, 2023

The results reveal the mean and standard deviation of the residents' perception of CBT and individual participation (Table 2). Most of the respondents consider that community members can organize and participate in the cultural events and festivals as highly prioritized field with a mean value (4.09 ± 0.69). The need for necessary facilities and the support of local people are required for the development of CBT in the area (3.93 ± 0.8). Thus, CBT may promote local cultural heritage, alleviate poverty and bring sustainable economic and environmental development (3.83 ± 0.85). Therefore, local residents are interested directly to take part in CBT planning and development (3.89 ± 0.95). Involvement in the tourism decision making policies for CBT development, particularly in the management of natural and cultural resources may create more jobs opportunities for local people (3.7 ± 0.90). Hence, the presence of CBT authority or planner in the local community is essential, for entrepreneurial opportunities to local people (3.66 ± 0.90). Dukpa community has the potential that may be a CBT tourist destination, which may also provide environmental education training programme to the local people, and help to increase the standard of living within the community (3.66 ± 0.90). The local government encourages the community to participate in CBT development, which may improve the quality of public services for CBT development (0.55 ± 0.90). Local government or NGOs encourage community members to establish CBT that may foster intercultural understanding and respect to other cultures (3.35 ± 0.90).

6.2. Cultural heritage conservation

Table 3. Residents' perception on cultural heritage conservation

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Development of CBT explores more cultural activities	4.06	0.73
Development of CBT conserves oral traditions	4.01	0.71
Development of CBT increases cultural education and awareness to preserve the culture	3.94	0.72
Development of CBT preserves traditional sports	3.89	0.89
Development of CBT preserves traditional cuisine	3.86	0.76
Cultural heritage of my community is an important part of the area and is of great importance	3.83	0.93
Development of CBT conserves folk songs, music and dance	3.81	0.91
Development of CBT results intergenerational cultural promotion	3.75	0.87
Development of CBT conserves traditional rituals and festivals	3.74	0.87
Local govt. encourages the community to maintain their cultural heritage	3.73	0.92
Development of CBT conserves the traditional architecture and history	3.73	0.92
Development of CBT preserves traditional antiques, arts and handicrafts	3.70	0.85
Development of CBT conserves religious activities	3.66	0.97
There is a positive effects of CBT in maintaining the cultural identity	3.63	0.90
Development of CBT conserves traditional costumes	3.62	0.89

Source: Primary Survey, 2023

The result of Table 3 reveals residents' perception on cultural heritage conservation through community-based tourism. Majority of the respondents opine that development of CBT explores more cultural activities and conserves oral traditions having mean value (4 ± 0.7), followed by development of CBT increases cultural education and awareness to preserve the culture (3.94 ± 0.72), preserves traditional sports (3.89 ± 0.98), traditional cuisine (3.86 ± 0.76), conserves folk songs, music and dance (3.81 ± 0.91), conserves traditional rituals and festivals (3.74 ± 0.87), conserves the traditional architecture and history (3.73 ± 0.92), preserves traditional antiques, arts and handicrafts (3.70 ± 0.85),



and conserves religious activities (3.66 ± 0.97). Therefore, Cultural heritage of the Dukpa community is an important part of the area and is of great importance.

6.3. Relationship between CBT and cultural heritage conservation

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis between CBT and cultural heritage conservation

Domain		A	B
Community-based tourism (A)	Pearson Correlation	1	.344**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Cultural heritage conservation (B)	Pearson Correlation	.344**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Survey, 2023

Figure: 1 Scatter plot showing the relationship between CBT and cultural heritage conservation

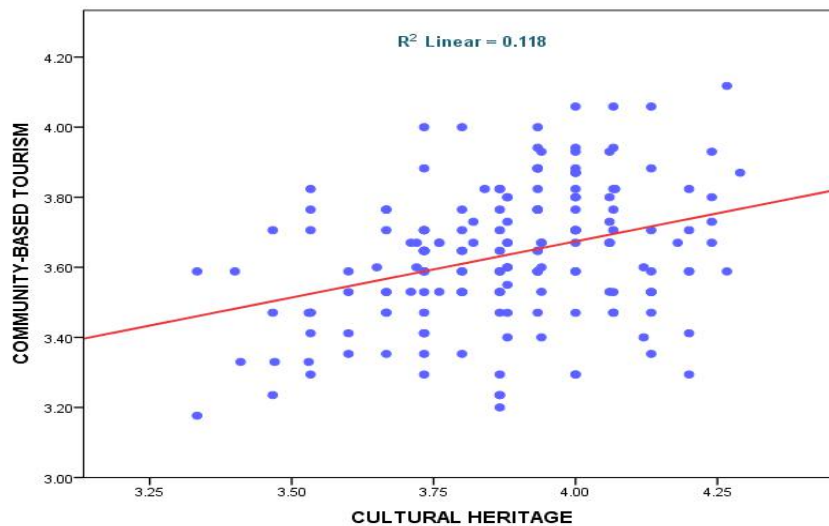


Table 4 and figure 1 show Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis between CBT and cultural heritage conservation. CBT development is positively correlated with cultural heritage conservation ($r = .344^{**}$) which is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed). This implies that community-based tourism is associated with moderate levels of cultural heritage conservation. For instance, tourists go to the villages and enjoy traditional sports, music, dance, and drama, which are associated with local communities' control over their traditions. The observation result has revealed that they celebrate their traditional festivals *Lohsar* during the month of January. The purpose of this festival is to welcome the New Year. In this occasion, the Dukpa male people perform and enjoy their traditional archery and wear traditional costumes known as *Baku*. The study area has a monastery where Dukpa females perform their dances and songs wearing traditional costumes known as *Kira*. The above practices are carried out by the local communities to maintain their cultural identities [20].

Table 5: Results of t-test analysis of socio-demographic variables for CBT and cultural heritage conservation

Independent variables		Dependent variables	
		Community-based tourism	Cultural heritage conservation
Gender	Male	3.66	3.88
	Female	3.60	3.86
	Mean Difference	0.06	0.02
	<i>t</i> - value	2.192	0.699
	<i>p</i> - value	0.030*	0.485
Age	<55	3.65	3.86



	>55	3.57	3.90
	Mean Difference	0.08	-0.03
	<i>t</i> - value	2.46	-0.88
	<i>p</i> - value	0.015*	0.378
Education	Low	3.62	3.88
	High	3.70	3.81
	Mean Difference	-0.07	0.06
	<i>t</i> - value	-2.12	1.98
	<i>p</i> - value	0.041*	0.043*
Income	Low	3.67	3.91
	High	3.48	3.73
	Mean Difference	0.19	0.17
	<i>t</i> - value	6.26	5.01
	<i>p</i> - value	0.000**	0.000**
* Significant at $p < 0.05$ level and ** $p < 0.01$ level			

Source : Source: Primary Survey, 2023

Note: Values in each row under socio-demographic variables refer to the mean score of responses. Age category <55 refer to 18 to 55 and above >55. Low and high education levels refer to higher secondary or below and undergraduate or above. Low and high level income refer to monthly family income < Rs. 5000/- and > Rs. 5000/- respectively.

Independent sample t-test analysis of socio-demographic variables for CBT and cultural heritage conservation are demonstrated in Table 5. There are significant statistical mean differences in the perception of residents towards CBT development based on gender, with a mean value of 3.66 for males and 3.60 for females. Similarly, no statistically significant difference was found in cultural heritage conservation, with a mean value of 3.88 for males and 3.86 for females. In terms of age category, there was significant statistical mean difference in the perception of residents towards CBT, with a mean value of 3.65 for residents aged <55 and 3.57 for residents aged >55. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference found in cultural heritage conservation in the age category. The perception regarding CBT and cultural heritage conservation among respondents was found to have significant statistical mean differences in terms of education and income.

7. FINDINGS :

- The Pearson correlation coefficients suggests that the CBT development is positively correlated with cultural heritage conservation ($r = .344^{**}$).
- There are significant statistical differences in the perception of residents towards CBT development in terms of gender, age, education and income.
- There are significant statistical differences in the perception of residents towards conservation of cultural heritage, education and income.
- Dukpa community members organize and participate in the cultural events and festivals that support CBT development in the area.
- Findings also indicate that CBT contributes to preserve tangible and intangible culture of the Dukpa community in the study area.
- CBT promotes local cultural heritage, alleviates poverty and brings sustainable economic and environmental development in the study area.

8. CONCLUSION:

This study investigated the relationship between community-based tourism and cultural heritage conservation. The results indicate a positive relationship and therefore, there is a need to encourage community-based tourism for conservation and development of the community and their areas of habitation. Majority of the community members opine that tourists prefer traditional cuisines and beverages, arts and crafts. Tourists attended traditional ceremonies and festivals enjoy music, dance, drama and interested in the history of the community and their areas of residence. There



is a need for necessary infrastructure facilities for CBT development for the conservation of cultural heritage of Dukpa community. Local residents need to be aware about the importance of CBT and accordingly target and need based strategies have to be focused and implemented. There is a need to promote CBT through proper communication i.e. information dissemination, media coverage, consumer awareness, publications about the CBT. The suggested proposals may include community-based festival or cultural events; exhibition of their traditional cuisines and handicrafts, indigenous natural resource management strategies; Marketing opportunities of their local products; Storytelling and conservation of their culture and heritages. Simultaneously, there is a need to form tourism-based NGOs through collaborative and participatory efforts for CBT development.

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