

# Community-based tourism affinity index: a visitor's approach

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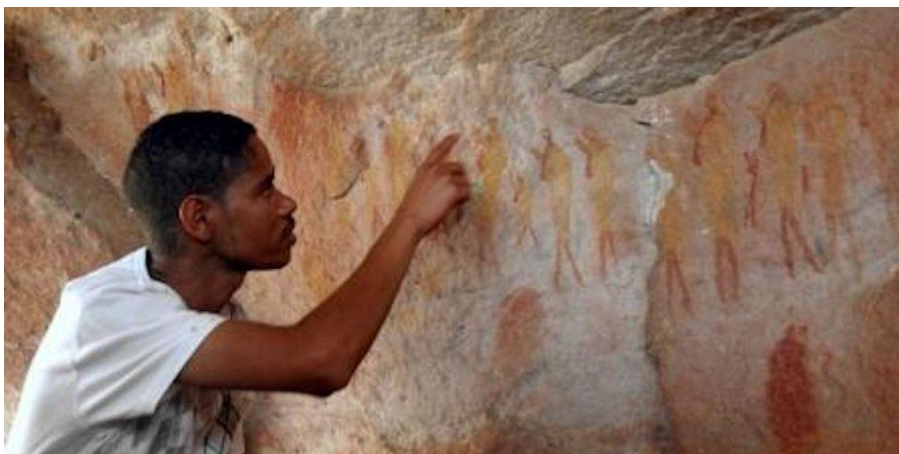
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## Abstract

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a model of community development which places the community at the centre of that development. It attempts to harness the effort of communities through their empowerment for the benefit of the community. This article develops a Community-based Visitors Affinity Index (CBTVAI) based on perusal of extant literature in which only secondary was used in terms of research methodology. The key contribution of this article is the development of a CBTVAI which is an instrument useful to owners/managers of CBT entities in evaluating their CBT businesses from a visitor perspective. The index does not include all possible items because CBT ventures exist in different contexts with different requirements. This index merely provides sample items related various basic aspects linked to the attractiveness of CBT to visitors. As such, the index represents a flexible framework which can continuously evolve and be reformulated based on specific needs of a CBT entity. The CBTVAI has some strengths and weaknesses. Some of its strengths include the provision a visitor perspective grounded in real life experience; a framework for profiling CBT ventures; a platform for receiving visitor feedback in the form of immediate 'post-trip' feedback; and a tool for assessing broad visitor/customer (dis)satisfaction with CBT offerings. The weaknesses include: failing to take into account the visitor's demographics and psychographics; ignores prices per item; places an extra burden on communities to undertake technical data analysis which skills could be deficient in communities.

**Keywords:** tourism; community-based tourism; tourism index; tourism market; tourists



Source: <http://www.southafrica.net>

## Introduction

The tourism sector has been recognised as the largest and faster growing economic sector worldwide (Hussin and Kunjuraman, 2014:4; Konwar and Chakraborty, 2014:942). Kayat et al. (2015: 223) argue that when tourism is viewed purely through a numerical lens, based on the concept of growth it 'can actually lead to destruction.' An alternative narrative postulates that despite the negative effects of tourism, if it is properly managed, it can still be used as a developmental tool: Cini and Saayman (2013:664) observe that tourism is still a viable option for purposes of development despite its well-known costs which are socio-cultural, economic and environmental. This varied outlook of the tourism sector gave birth to alternative forms of tourism on its path to development such as community-based tourism (CBT). CBT emerged as an alternative form in tourism development intended to counteract mass tourism (Mearns and Lukhele, 2015:2; Yilmaz and Tasci, 2013a: 25). It is considered a viable option for community development especially in developing countries (Mearns and Lukhele, 2015: 2; Rodrigues and Prideaux, 2012:526) including countries such as the COMCEC (Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) which in 2013 mentioned CBT as a possible option of tourism development for its members countries (see COMCEC, 2013; Tasci et al., 2013; see also, for example, on specific case studies- Mershen, 2007 on Oman; Al-Oun and Al-Homoud, 2008, for the Bedouins in the Badia of Jordan and so forth). In this context, CBT is seen as a viable option for the developing world as well as for COMCEC countries as Tasci et al. (2013:1) observes: 'Considering that 21 out of 57 member countries of the COMCEC are the Least Developed Member Countries (LDCs), CBT can be an important tool for the COMCEC region in rural development and poverty alleviation.' Tolkach and King (2015:386) argue that CBT is an ideal model of development in circumstances which attempt to minimise

the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and maximise the socioeconomic benefits of tourism for the good of the community. It is therefore imperative to recognise the multiple aspects associated with CBT for a better understanding of it its implementers and to increase its chances of success. One important aspect which is often forgotten is a visitor perspective of CBT. Thus, with these insights forming the basis of this paper, a contextualisation of the issues is pertinent:

Despite the growing interest in community-based tourism especially for underdeveloped, less-developed and developing places, community based tourism is largely defined in supply-side terms and demand side remains a relatively under-studied area. However, as any tourism type, community-based tourism cannot sustain itself without tourists, and understanding the characteristics of them is only vital for the future of community-based initiatives. The characteristics of a potential community-based tourism consumer -socio-demographics, psychographics, and behaviour – could help managers and marketers to target the right markets for successful community-based tourism development (Yilmaz and Tasci, 2013a:25).

A research on CBT markets in Europe reflects similar lines of thinking, implying that "There is little research available on the 'CBT traveller'. In fact, the 'CBT traveller' does not exist! Therefore, it is very hard to give a precise tourist profile" (CBI, 2015:28). The same study (CBI 2015) however, indicates general guidelines of the CBT tourists profile (see later this paper). In their study on CBT visitor profile, Yilmaz and Tasci (2013a:25) indicate that their findings may be helpful to developers and marketers of CBT ventures in highlighting the profile of communities with the potential to embrace CBT initiatives.

Following from these same matters, this paper proposes a CBT visitor affinity index (CBTVAI) which serves to relate CBT

with the needs and expectations of visitors. Using literature and various published documents, such as visitor satisfaction surveys, visitor profiles, CBT manuals and handbooks, the paper develops a CBTVAI and contributes to the bridging of the gap in the understanding of visitors' needs in CBT and the development of an index which can make CBT ventures/projects more attractive to visitors. As such, the paper is not about the discussion of visitor satisfaction *per se* but it uses these documents and literature as sources of information to extrapolate specific topic 'items' which are related to CBT visitors. This paper is complementary to a paper on the development and usage of the community-based tourism development affinity index (CBTAI) (see Giampiccoli and Mtapuri, forthcoming). Finally, the CBTVAI ideally should be used alongside the conventional tourism grading system for comprehensive CBT market knowledge and tools. This paper, therefore, will focus exclusively on the CBTVAI.

Importantly, the aim of the CBTVAI is to create an instrument which can assist the (owners/managers) of a CBT entity to evaluate the state of their CBT business in relation to CBT itself and its visitors. To this end, it is proposed that visitors (or potential visitors) themselves will also contribute to developing CBT by filling a 'CBTVAI' questionnaire form (in loco or as in market research) in order to always improve the CBTVAI of each CBT entity. This index will not include all possible items (this is a huge challenge to obtain a comprehensive picture as each situation can have different needs as well as a different context). The index merely aims to give a sample of items in relation to various basic aspects linked to the attractiveness of CBT to visitors. The CBTVAI in this context, is deemed to be a flexible framework which can continuously evolve and be reformulated based on specific needs.

After this introductory section, the paper presents a literature review on CBT which serves to highlight the basic issues related to CBT and the reasons and needs of the

CBTVAI. Therefore, this section shows the various topics (the 'items') which the subsequent section of the paper uses to develop the CBTVAI. A conclusion ends the paper.

### Literature review

Numerous studies related to CBT exist (Ardianto, 2012:30). CBT has the capacity to increase economic diversification as a developmental tool in disadvantaged contexts by development cooperation entities (Aminudin et al., 2015:247; Lee et al. 2012:362). But there are problems and difficulties associated with CBT. One major and recurring reason for the failure or non-achievement of targets by these ventures is marketing. This issue has been widely covered in literature (see for examples Forstner, 2004:498; Haylen (n.d.); Ndabeni and Rogerson, 2005:139; Rozga and Spenceley, 2006:4; Timothy, 2002:161). In relation to marketing, CBI (2015:30) notes that a deficit in marketing knowledge has resulted in the failure of many CBT ventures. Mallya (2006:184) shares the same perspective by arguing that CBT projects have failed purely because of not being able to attract visitors in sufficient numbers to ensure viability of these ventures and because marketing efforts of specific locations were done without proper research. Thus, whatever CBT development has taken place either through a community effort alone or with the assistance and facilitation of an external entity (as often is the case – see Mtapuri and Giampiccoli 2014), market research and understanding of visitor expectations when visiting a CBT venture/project are very important in enhancing the success of CBT development. Kayat, (2014:4) argues that efficient marketing is needed for CBRTs [Community-based Rural Tourism] projects to be able to raise awareness about their offerings and inform potential visitors as they choose destinations and for purposes of ensuring sustainability. Market knowledge is equally important and relevant for the long-term horizon. The post-trip concept is also relevant as 'the post-trip image evaluation of the destination by the visitors is seen to

directly influence their satisfaction with the experience and influence their future intentions to revisit the destination' (Cini and Saayman, 2013:665). Therefore, matching of visitors and CBT ventures /projects is also valuable for marketing through the post-trip image which can inform decisions to visit or not visit by visitors. Marketing and market research are important considering that the CBT market is growing. For example, in Europe, it has been postulated that 'almost 50% of mainstream tourists have an interest in some aspects of CBT' (CBI, 2015:28). Different perspectives with respect to CBT markets exist. As such, CBT usually attracts tourists because it is a niche market in the hospitality industry (Aminudin et al., 2015: 247). Aminudin et al. (2015:247) observe that marketing matters can be difficult when left to communities.

This paper raises the importance of an understanding which goes beyond attracting a 'mere' CBT niche market but to view CBT as a possible tourism approach whose aim is elevating the practice to a grander scale (see Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2015). As such, the authors of this paper believe that knowledge of visitor needs and expectations is relevant and can serve in propelling CBT beyond the niche market context.

The definition of CBT usually entails a supply side and a visitor (demand) side context that encompasses issues relating to the CBT ventures and the community on the one side of the continuum, while matters related to the visitor and the relationship with the hosts and CBT ventures are positioned on the other side of the continuum. From a demand side, in general, it can be said that 'Community-Based Tourism (CBT) enables tourists to discover local habitats and wildlife, celebrates and respects traditional cultures, rituals, and wisdom' (Ardianto, 2012). As such, besides the supply side issues, the other in CBT 'is that it should aim to allow the visitors to experience the lifestyle of the community as a way for them to learn about the hosts' traditional

culture' (Kayat, 2014:1). Community-based homestay tourism (as a form of CBT) is closely associated with local cultural experiences which entails the living of the guest in the host's home to learn and participate in local ways of life (Jamal et al., 2011:5). It can be said that CBT involves meeting the needs and curiosity of visitors through experiencing and learning the everyday routine ways of life of local people as expressed in their traditions, cultures and lifestyles (Konwar and Chakraborty, 2014:942). In a study on CBT in Swaziland, for example, it was postulated that CBT allows visitors to immerse themselves first-hand in the way of life of Swazis (Mearns and Lukhele, 2015:5). Calanog et al. (2012:187) argue that community-based ecotourism enterprise (CBEE) should 'provide a meaningful satisfaction to visitors.' By the same token, importantly, the host community should not be damaged in anyway by the tourist intrusion implying that CBT development should not impact negatively on their traditions, culture or day-to-day convenience as they live their lives (De Jesus, 2003: 29; also in Timothy, 2002:15).

It is important to note that visitors to a CBT project search for 'authenticity' of community life as CBT and homestay activities are meant to have close contact between the visitors and the host such that the visitors are able to experience 'the authentic and untouched' (Dolezal, 2011:131). However an important caveat needs to be noted herein order to avoid possible misunderstandings on the relation between guests and visitors related to visitors' expectations when visiting CBT entities. Therefore, for CBT 'it is most important to ensure that people in the areas visited do still feel like human beings and not like part of a human zoo. This is where CBT can make its contribution by ensuring equal meeting grounds for people without a voyeuristic approach by tourists' (Dolezal, 2011:135). In a South African case study Boonzaaier and Philip (2007:32) observe that while the community is the custodian of 'sought-after tourist attraction [...] Tourism in itself should not be blamed for affecting a

culture's authenticity' and when a 'community lives in a particular way which is generally accepted by its members, that way has to be regarded as real and thus authentic. It cannot be considered authentic when a community is portrayed as living in a kind of time capsule which has somehow managed to escape the effects of the modern world' (Boonzaaier and Philip, 2007:32). They also argue that of equal importance in CBT is the fact that the community should not be denied the opportunities to earn an income through cultural tourism lest they be accused of losing their so-called 'authenticity' (Boonzaaier and Philip, 2007:32; see also Sin and Minca, 2014, for the problematics of 'going local' in CBT; and Salazar, 2012, on the depiction of the 'exotic Other' in CBT).

A number of visitor indices focusing on various aspects have been developed and used in the tourism literature as well as other tourism related documents. For example, there is the Customer Well-Being (CWB) index related to natural wildlife tourism (see Lee et al., 2014); the Leisure Visitor Satisfaction Index Analysis used by the Bermuda Tourism Authority (see Bermuda Tourism Authority, 2014); and the Tourist Pressure Index (TPI) which represents an approach to predict the spatial distribution of visitors within protected areas (see Hadwen et al., 2008). Alegre and Garau (2009) did a critical study of indexes which lists and uses a number of visitors' related indexes such as Overall Satisfaction Index and Weighted Satisfaction Indices, and ultimately the same indices are used to compare a number of tourism destinations. In addition, the Product Inventory Matrix and/or Product Competitiveness Index has been proposed and is useful in CBT (see Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009: 64). However, a specific visitor index for CBT seems absent.

It is important to observe that in this context that Alegre and Garau (2009:11, 23) suggest from the literature that 'tourist destinations are not competitive or non-competitive in the abstract, but only in

relation to other destinations' and they further note that 'it is the whole tourist experience that counts when it comes to destination competitiveness.' They also observe that 'a tourist destination is a mixture of products and experiences that combine to create a unique experience' (Alegre and Garau, 2009: 6). Nevertheless, it has been observed that most studies with a few exceptions 'customer satisfaction in travel and tourism in general focuses exclusively on some aspects of travel needs [and] very little research focuses on the totality of the tourist experience' (Lee et al., 2014:172).

CBT as a specific tourism sector is not exempt from these issues. As such each CBT entity/location competes with others and, at the same time, with other forms of tourism such as conventional mass tourism, ecotourism, and cruise tourism and so on. In addition, CBT entities and locations have to offer a positive experience in all aspects because it is the 'whole experience that counts'. Therefore, this means that as many aspects of the CBT experience as possible should be taken into account when developing a CBT visitor index. All in all, as proposed in a CBT handbook 'Visitor satisfaction is an essential element of business enterprise sustainability. Satisfied customers stay longer, spend more, and when they go home they recommend the destination to their friends. Visitor satisfaction is the result of a complex mix of factors including prior experience and expectations as well as the actual experience at the site' (Twining-Ward et al., 2007:13). While this is not a fully comprehensive and a 'last word' in CBT visitor indices, the next section presents a CBTVAI which attempts to include different aspects of the visitors' needs and expectations in CBT. The CBTVAI gives some examples of items which each CBT entity will have, the CBT can have its own specific items to add or subtract in the index. In the same way, each visitor will be unique, as 'the 'CBT traveller' does not exist! [and] Although a general profile could be created, please be aware that each traveller is unique and may have special needs for their holidays' (CBI, 2015:28).

The CBTVAI presented here could be developed further in other research initiatives, in this paper, however, it deals with the more fundamental and underlying matters related to visitor relationships with CBT.

Furthermore, in the same manner as for the CBTAI (see Giampiccoli and Mtapuri, forthcoming), the simplicity of the CBTVAI is meant to allow CBT actors to understand and manage the CBTVAI itself. The CBTVAI is related to practical matters of the CBT entity itself, therefore more 'abstract' matters such as visitor emotional issues (see for example Jamal et al., 2011:11) as much as important, are not taken into account in this paper but future research could consider them in the context of this index. Therefore, this paper deals with, and reflects issues of a material nature.

## RESULTS

### **Towards a Community-based tourism visitor affinity index (CBTVAI)**

The CBTVAI includes both aspects which are visible and felt by visitors as well as issues of a management nature of the CBT entities which can include visitor attractions. The system of quality assurance, for example, is not directly felt by the tourist but it is a concrete measure which can be useful in order for CBT entities to be able to maintain a high quality standard thereby enhancing the visitor experience. It must be understood that many aspects influence the attractiveness of CBT entities to visitors and these aspects can be viewed from different angles. As such, various activities and infrastructure issues as well as matters of quality are considered as important. For instance, in a homestay tourism (for the relation and similarity and differences between homestay and CBT see Hussin and Kunjuraman, 2014; Dolezal, 2011; Suansri, 2003, 18) issues of quality are important because 'there are homestay handlers who neglect improving the service quality and infrastructure of their homestays. This affects tourists' interest and satisfaction with the Homestay Programme. For example: 'the

bathrooms and toilets at Kundasang homestay do not meet the expectations of tourists' (Hussin and Kunjuraman 2014: 43). These issues are important as CBT competes with other tourism sectors such as hotels (see Hussin and Kunjuraman, 2014:43). On a different note, in another homestay, 'tourists have the chance to gain new experiences when they are in the area such as exposed to them fishing activity which one of the main activities in that homestay. Moreover, the participants have a chance to acquire new skills in fishing by the paddy fields. Therefore, community-based tourism in the context of a homestay programme, gives opportunities to the tourists to stay together and learn how the locals live their daily lives in a tourism destination' (Hussin and Kunjuraman, 2014:46). Again another CBT project claims that currently visitors can 'discover and share the everyday life of the community. The visitors are thus placed in the traditional ranches and are catered typical meals, prepared from food products collected in the reserve. Activities are varied and are primarily based on the discovery of the natural environment and the Maleku culture. Activities include excursions to the main sites of ecological and cultural interest and to cultivated lands, excursions to discover fauna and flora, excursions in the primary forest, participation in the indigenous ceremonies and further discovery of the Maleku culture such as learning about medicinal herbs used. In parallel, there is a reforestation program and a conservation program to preserve the natural habitat of the animal species' (Fiorello and Bo, 2012:766).

Evidently, different issues are thus needed to build a CBTVAI and as such various sources have been used. This CBTVAI proposes a number of items because it has the aim to present a possible system of development and management of a CBTVAI. It does not however, list all possible items which essentially not possible and not useful because each CBT context is different.

First of all it is important to realise that, a proper CBT should not be confused with a short stay (maybe a few hours visit) to a

community. Thus, while ‘Many tour operators include short visits of a few hours to local communities in their itinerary...it is important to realise that these short visits (often arts and crafts shopping trips) are not CBT’(CBI, 2009;14). Suansri (2003:18) rightly proposes that ‘short visits are often simply ‘arts and crafts’ shopping trips that some incorrectly label as ‘CBT.’ As such, it is necessary for a CBT venture/project to have facilities and infrastructures which allow for ‘a-long-stay’ guests. This is an important and basic issue because what is needed for a few hours (maybe one day) is little infrastructure and facilities, including activities and programmes as opposed to what is required for a long stay. The fundamental issues are that CBT should allow a visitor ‘full immersion’ in the local reality, to a learning experience and understanding of the local context which, in turn, should represent itself as ‘authentic’ as much as possible (see above about issues related to authenticity). Therefore, issues related to infrastructure, facilities, activities and their

quality and safety/security of visitors should complement other items in the CBTVAI.

The CBTVAI contains the following fundamental factors:

- Allow for long stay – thus with suitable infrastructures, facilities and other services;
- Be ‘authentic’;
- Facilitate the ‘Full immersion’ learning experience and understanding of local context by providing proper activities;
- Money paid by visitors should go to CBT entities (not to operators external to community); and
- Have specific natural, man-made and cultural attractions related to local context.

Thereafter, issues of cleanness/hygiene, quality and variety of products and services, safety/security and quality/price relationship are also relevant. Table 1 below shows some possible elements in a CBTVAI.

**Table 1.** CBTVAI

Items	Sub-items		Rating √√√√
Infrastructure A	Roads	Tar	
		Gravel	
		No access road	
	Water	Tap water	
		Borehole water	
		Spring water	
		River water	
	Electricity	Attached to grid	
		Independent electricity (eg. Solar panel)	
		No electricity	
	Telecommunication	Cellular network	
		Landline phone	
Internet			
Sub-total A			
Facilities B	Toilet	Flush toilet	
		Hole	
		No toilet	
	Shower and/or bath		
	Accommodation	In family	
		In lodge	
In tent camp			
Sub-total B			
Emergency / other	Hospital		

services C	Post office		
	Bank		
Sub-total C			
Attractions D	Natural	Forest	
		River	
		Sea	
	Man made	Specific architecture	
		Temple/church	
	Cultural	Festival	
		Ceremony	
Dance			
Arts and crafts			
Sub-total D			
Activities E	With community members in their everyday life (for free)	Work in fruit and vegetable gardens	
		Cooking	
	Specifically for visitors (paid activities)	Nature trekking	
		Cooking classes	
		Dance/art and crafts classes	
Shopping of locally made products (eg. arts and crafts)			
Sub-total E			
'Authenticity F	Food		
	Architecture accommodation		
Sub-total F			
Food and meals G	In the family		
	In local 'restaurant'		
	Formal restaurant		
	Variety (include at least 2 of other items within G)		
Sub-total G			
Payment by visitor H	Directly to host		
	To community entity		
	To external entity to the community		
Sub-total H			
Quality /price value I	Quality		
	Price		
	Relation quality/price		
Sub-total I			
Visitor access J	Bus		
	Train		
	Visitor own car		
	Walking in		
Sub-total J			
Cleanness / Hygiene K	Accommodation	Bedroom	
		Bed/linens	
	Meals	Common areas	
Sub-total K			
General safety / security L	Accommodation		
	Activities in the village		
	Excursions outside the village		
Sub-total L			
Grand Total			
Legend: √ Very poor; √√ Poor; √√√ Satisfactory; √√√√ Good; √√√√√ Very good			

Sources: CBTVAI Tables have been developed from ideas and following: Yilmaz and Tasci, 2013b; Suansri, 2003; Hussin and Kunjuraman, 2014; The Snow Leopard Conservancy 2001; Jamal et al. 2011; Konwar and



Chakraborty, 2014; Calanog et al. 2012; Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009; Häusler and Strasdas, 2003; Twining-Ward et al. 2007; Asker et al. 2010; The Mountain Institute 2000; CBI 2015.

$$CBTVAI = (A + B + C + D + E + F + G + H + I + J + K + L) / 12$$

Where

A, B, D ...L represent the sub-totals under each broad item. For example, letter A represents the sub-total under 'Infrastructure', while letter B represents the sub-total under 'Facilities'. The 12 in the denominator is the number representing the total number of broad items being examined. In this case there are 12 broad items spanning from letter A to letter L.

Using the grand total, facilities can be assigned 'Stars' for grading purposes. The assignment of 'stars' can be done by an independent body with state assistance to celebrate excellence and achievement in communities. From visitor's perspective as well as the owners of CBT entities it can be good to gauge whether or not the CBT entity is attractive to them as such a final mark is needed. In which case, each tick (✓) can carry a value of 10 points. Thus, a grand total of 360 could represent 'satisfactory' standard because 3 ticks (✓) equate to 360/12=30. Therefore

120 points (grand total) = ✓ = very poor

240 points (grand total) = ✓✓ = poor

360 points (grand total) = ✓✓✓ = satisfactory

480 points (grand total) = ✓✓✓✓ = good

600 Points (grand total) = ✓✓✓✓✓ = very good

As such, each sub-total would represent the average of the scores of the various items (✓).

## DISCUSSION

For each item above the CBTVAI should facilitate and promote (and practically manage) a monitoring system to regularly survey the quality standard of each proposed CBTVAI item. This is important because 'Quality and control standards impact on the total visitor experience' (Asker et al. 2010, p. 30). Thus, for example for item *food /meals*- a quality system should be put in place to guarantee the 'quality of food/meals experience' as presented in Table 2

**Table 2:** Specific items grading

Food / meals					
	✓ Very poor	✓✓ Poor	✓✓✓ Satisfactory	✓✓✓✓ Good	✓✓✓✓✓ Very good
Food / meals quality					
Food / meals variety					
Visitor safety/security of food areas					
Cleanness of the food areas					
General hygiene related to food/meals					

The matters of quality in relation to price should be assessed by looking at other tourism realities in the area if possible by comparing prices based on quantity, variety and quality offered by the CBT entity.

As much as the system seems laborious, it is seen as fundamental to build a proper CBT initiative as the perception and experience which the visitors have of the CBT venture/project can impact the growth or the collapse of the CBT initiative. Furthermore, as CBT involves a

number of community members, a team or a number of them can be in charge of this process (maybe in rotation) in order not to put the management of the CBTVAI on one person alone. At the beginning, an external facilitator could assist the community whenever needed to establish and manage the Index system. The strategy is to use the CBTVAI in CBT entities based on the CBVAI results and outcomes in order to increase the attractiveness of the entity for visitors interested in CBT. The CBTVAI can contribute to directing the development of the CBT venture/project to become a more visitor attuned taste and experience. As such the marketing strategy can be informed by CBTVAI to position the CBT entity in a positive frame for a specific target market.

It is evident that the CBTVAI has its strengths and weaknesses. Some of its strengths include:

- It provides a visitor perspective grounded in real life experience;
- It provides a framework within which to profile CBT ventures which is critical for CBT marketing and important for CBT market developers;
- It provides a platform through which visitors can provide their feedback. In other words it provides immediate 'post-trip' feedback;
- It is a tool to assess broadly visitor/customer (dis)satisfaction with CBT offerings;
- It represents a tool to match visitors with CBT ventures and supports the creation of niche markets and beyond. It is ideal for the creation of a unique experience;
- It is simple and straight forward to use;
- It provides a yardstick through which to grade facilities into 'stars'.

The weaknesses of the CBTVAI include the following:

- It does not take into account the visitor's demographics and psychographics. For marketing purpose, it can be useful to take into account visitor's demographics and

psychographics. In other words, other items covering visitor's demographics and psychographics could also be added as necessary;

- Ignores prices per item (but it consider only the overall price and quality as well as quality/price relationship) which is a key determinant with respect to whether a visitor visits or not. Price is also a very important aspect in overall tourism growth/development. It is possible however to include price and quality issues for specific items when necessary;
- As an aspect of market research/survey, it places a heavy burden on communities to undertake such technical functions especially the analysis of the data which requires technical/analytic skills which communities may not possess (initial assistance from an external facilitator could be of help here);

## Conclusion

This paper examined various indices in extant literature to develop a CBTVAI. The CBTVAI which is posited in this paper is an important tool in profiling and marketing CBT ventures. While it is very important for the survival and sustainability of CBT ventures, marketing, however, cannot be left to communities alone hence there is need to involve government and other stakeholders to sell CBT ventures. The community, however, should remain in control of the CBT entity. CBT is about immersion in local culture and the ways of life of communities.

It is thus not a stint for a few hours or a day to take pictures in communities and purchasing one or two items of art or craft. As such, for CBT to be authentic, it should allow for longer (duration) stays in communities with immersion in local context practices for the enjoyment of natural, man-made and cultural attractions which these communities have. The CBTVAI is one tool which can enrich that experience if used in practice by all CBT stakeholders.

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