

## Towards a Spontaneous Community Participation Model in Community-Based Tourism

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### Abstract

This article proposes guidelines and themes related to the advancement of spontaneous community participation for community-based tourism (CBT). Community-based tourism has its own difficulties and challenges, however it can still be a valuable strategy to advance community development through tourism. Globally, CBT has been embraced as a tourism development approach in various geographical contexts. In South Africa the Government has published specific Operational guidelines for community-based tourism and reflects on community participation in tourism over the last decades. This paper does not intend to idealise CBT or deny the possible use of external assistance. However, it proposes a facilitative approach, as the base of spontaneous participation to positively favour community spontaneous participation in CBT. This article proposes a community participation model, based on the extrapolation of themes on spontaneous participation. The proposed model is flexible and adjustable to various contexts aimed for global relevance. This is a conceptual paper based on secondary data and was compiled from existing literature and online sources.

**Keywords:** Community-based tourism, community participation, spontaneous community participation, tourism

### Introduction

Community-based tourism (CBT) is an alternative form of tourism development, which is geared towards generating and maximizing opportunities for residents of a local community (Curcija, Breakey & Driml, 2019). It has also been mentioned that the concept is associated with other aspects of alternative tourism that foster social and environmental restructuring such as responsible tourism, pro-poor tourism, ecotourism, volunteer tourism, fair trade tourism and justice tourism (Doganer, 2017; Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017; Reggers, Grabowski, Wearing, Chatterton & Schweinsberg, 2016). Community-based tourism utilises local culture and rural or natural surroundings such as attractions with high involvement of community residents during the development and operation of the venture (Ernawati, Sanders & Dowling 2017).

Numerous scholars have recognized CBT as a suitable developmental model for increasing the socio-economic benefits of tourism while curtailing undesirable environmental impacts (Moscardo, 2008; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Ruiz-Ballesteros & Hernandez-Ramírez, 2010). However, CBT is subjected to challenges and difficulties (Giampiccoli and Saayman 2018; Tolkach & King, 2015). Particularly through its approaches and techniques of implementation which are at the center of the success or failure of the CBT ventures (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). CBT is also confronted with challenges such as lack of tourism expertise within the community, benefits concentrated to local elites, an absence of private sector partnerships and poor connections or access to global tourism distribution channels and markets amongst others (Ernawati et al., 2017; Tolkach & King, 2015). Moreover, the practicality and sustainability of CBT are uncertain, as tourism activities in most cases are controlled by community leaders, government organisations and tourism consultants who dominate local activities and income generation opportunities (Strydom, Mangope & Henama, 2019). This situation disrupts the ideology of CBT which aims for the sharing of benefits amongst the community (Strydom et al., 2019). Thus, creating an impression that CBT is merely a concept that is dominated by certain groups who generate more benefits than the community itself (Junaid, Salam & Salim, 2019).

Previous studies by Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2015), Gumede and Nzama (2019) and Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2016) have focused on proposing inclusive models of CBT development and have assessed CBT principles based on community participation. This article builds on the relevance and opportunities that exist within community participation in tourism. More specifically, it influences the recognised value of CBT as a tourism development strategy in South Africa. This can be clearly noted by the fact that the South African National Department of Tourism (2016) published the Operational guidelines for community-based tourism in South Africa. The same guidelines (National Department of Tourism, 2016:7) opens by stating: “The role of communities in tourism in South Africa is strongly emphasised in a series of national policies and instruments that were established over the past two decades.” It is, therefore, important, to find ways to increase community participation in tourism. Hence, the purpose of this research is to propose a spontaneous community participation typology in CBT. While the typology is subject specific, it should be seen as flexible and adjustable to various contexts aiming for global relevance.

## **Literature review**

### ***Spontaneous community participation***

Numerous categories of community participation have been identified in the tourism development literature particularly through the inference of the United Nations which has categorized community participation under three main classifications (Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam, Mura & Nair, 2015; Tosun, 1999). These are inclusive of coercive participation, induced participation and spontaneous participation (Carasuk, Becken & Hughey, 2016; Kihima & Musila, 2019; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Ahmad & Barghi, 2017). As such, CBT projects may include diverse forms of community participation, from spontaneous to coercive participation (Agapito & Chan, 2019: 315). However, this study focuses on spontaneous participation. Spontaneous participation is, possibly, the closest type of participation associable with CBT when considering that “CBT is about people initiating, owing and controlling the development process from the beginning” (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018:9).

In spontaneous participation, the host community voluntarily participates in tourism development, this is based on the community’s own ideas and motivations (Saufi, O'Brien & Wilkins, 2014). This form of community participation relates to Arnstein's degrees of citizen power, as well as to self-mobilisation and interactive participation in Pretty's typology of

community participation (Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995: 4). It signifies the highest community control in the development process as well as the power to make decisions and creating community awareness, defining a non-centralised bottom-up approach (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017; Sood, Lynch & Anastasiadou, 2017). Consequently, community members are able to establish their own CBT operations without assistance from other experts, particularly from the government or business entities (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019). Moreover, at this level host community acquire complete control over the decision-making process and over tourism planning, obtaining the power of CBT project implementation as well as equitable benefit sharing and control of tourism revenues (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019; Kihima & Musila, 2019; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017; Schott & Nhem, 2018; Yanes, Zielinski, Diaz Cano & Kim, 2019).

Therefore, community members have the responsibility to identify communal problems and needs as well as to plan, manage, control and evaluate the collective actions that are proved necessary (Agapito & Chan, 2019). Relatively, this form of participation refers to a situation where there is a right to self-advocacy and a readiness on the part of local people to become involved in community activities (Xu, Jiang, Wall & Wang 2019). As a consequence, it generates trust, ownership and social capital amongst community members (Xu et al., 2019). As noted by Tosun (1999), spontaneous participation is voluntary, where people have control over their own problems without the need for external assistance. Spontaneous participation is also referred to in the developmental literature Tosun (1999) as bottom-up, community supportive, social participation, wide participation, active participation, authentic participation or self-planning.

### ***Community-based tourism***

The concept of CBT originates from the alternative development approach of the 1970s (Giampiccoli, 2015). It emerged in response to problems associated with mass tourism and the matters linked to sustainability in the 1980s (Ali & Zorlu, 2017; Giampiccoli, 2015). As such, CBT was established with an expectation of assisting rural communities in developing countries through grassroots development, citizen participation, empowerment and capacity building (Dangi & Jamal 2016: 9). More importantly, CBT was developed with the objective of establishing a bottom-up approach that provides realistic and comprehensive community participation at all levels of tourism development (Ndlovu, Sibiyi & Giampiccoli, 2018). As such, it focuses on long-term local development, that is grounded on a more equitable and enduring social model of development (Mano, Mayer & Fratucci, 2017). Although the concept of CBT emerges from a bottom-up approach, it is unlikely to emerge without the support of external partners as well as enablement (Giampiccoli, Abdul Muhsin & Mtapuri 2020). Therefore, it is in this context that the role of government is fundamental in providing such support through Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's) or specific CBT capacity building programmes (Giampiccoli et al., 2020). Moreover, the concept has been promoted as a means of development whereby, the socio-cultural, environmental and economic needs of local communities are met through tourism product offerings (Reggers et al., 2016). Thus, contributing to social and economic endurance of the marginalized communities in developing countries and the conservation of natural resources in the affected areas (Burgos & Mertens, 2017; Reggers et al., 2016).

Community-based tourism is interpreted as a form of tourism where the local community has significant control over tourism development and its benefits (Mgonja, Sirima, Backman & Backman, 2015; Tamir, 2015). It defines a form of tourism that is community-managed, consisting of numerous locally owned businesses, with the purpose of providing benefits to the community and contributing to preservation, when taking place in protected

areas (Curcija et al., 2019; Dodds 2015; Stone & Stone, 2020). More importantly, it indicates a form of tourism that provides high levels of community participation under the sustainability notion (Kaplan, 2015). The concept is viewed as working towards empowerment, self-reliance and comprehensive community development (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2015).

As a consequence, community members are able to take matters into their own hands, participate in their own development through assembling their own resources, defining their own needs and making their own decisions on how to meet their needs (Bittar Rodrigues & Prideaux, 2018). Furthermore, through the concept, underprivileged communities are able to build capacity, achieve empowerment, alleviate poverty, diversify livelihoods and encourage community participation in decision-making (Curcija et al., 2019; Dodds, Ali & Galaski, 2018). Relatively, CBT provides individuals with the resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills to increase their capability to determine their own future as well as to participate in matters that affect their lives (Dodds et al., 2018). The notion of CBT improves stakeholder cooperation, assisting struggling economies, reduces leakages, maximizes linkages and instils a sense of ownership amongst community members (Dodds, 2015; Dodds et al., 2018).

More importantly, CBT enables community members to attain economic gains from tourism expenditure while establishing independent communities (Curcija et al., 2019). If effective and successful, CBT contributes to durable economic development, cultural preservation, environmental consciousness, multicultural understanding and peace, as well as sustainable destination development (Ernawati et al., 2017; Tamir, 2015). On the contrary, CBT has been criticised and is noted to be subjected to inadequacies and difficulties (Blackstock, 2005; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Mitchell & Muckosy, 2008). In South Africa, independent CBT projects are often exposed to a lack of experience and managerial capacity despite community willingness (Ndlovu, Cele, Phoofolo, Gumede & Marschall, 2017). The CBT sector is particularly constrained by limited capacities in communities, limited knowledge of the market in designing products, limited access to information, skills and capital resources, as well as a lack of entrepreneurial and managerial skills (Imbaya, Nthiga, Sitati & Lenaiyasa 2019; Ndlovu et al., 2017). Consequently, the above-mentioned pitfalls of CBT serve as motives why communities fail to notice or understand the opportunities, costs and benefits related to CBT (Bello, Carr & Lovelock 2016). This failure enables external stakeholders to control the CBT benefits from the flow of information (Bello et al., 2016).

CBT failure is generated by a lack of capital for development, the nature of local politics, lack of comprehensive community support, extensive decision-making processes due to an absence of community consultation and a lack of understanding of the complexity of the planning process (Ernawati et al., 2017). The appointment of external managers and competent personnel to the local community to operate CBT projects may cause upcoming tensions, conflicts and an absence of cooperation by stakeholders such as in the case of KwaBhekithunga Cultural Village which is situated at the heart of Zululand in South Africa (Ndlovu et al., 2017). More importantly, the key processes of CBT are frequently beyond community control, posing a challenge to the concept of community, community-managed, community-owned, which is what the foundation of CBT is about (Schott & Nhem, 2018).

Additionally, the barriers for CBT arise from unequal power relations within the community as well as between the community and external actors (Zielinski et al., 2018). It is not unusual to note that CBT projects can be controlled by external actors (Joppe, 1996). Poor policy direction to support CBT has also been identified as a limitation particularly in developing countries, as such policy direction is often influenced by the government's expectation of extensive tourism development as well as projected foreign investment (Zielinski et al., 2018). Consequently, external investors are able to engage in opportunistic

behaviour, using government control and support to initiate hotels or tour operators in the utmost suitable spaces, thus disregarding locals from economic participation.

Critiques of CBT relates to the above mentioned constraints. Scholars such as Kiss (2004), López-Guzmán, Borges and Cerezo (2011), Mitchell and Reid (2001) Moscardo (2011), Simpson (2008), and Tosun (2000) question the extent of participation of the community in the tourism project and development. They also express concerns regarding the type of processes that communities get involved in regarding CBT projects and how such involvement relates to the local surroundings. According to Blackstock (2005), CBT supporters implement a functional approach that intends to appoint communities in CBT. Such an approach attains externally defined and driven goals, rather than concentrating on improving the lives of community members in which the tourism activity is taking place in. It has also been contended that the developmental and poverty-alleviation practicality of CBT is often constrained by administrative confines and dependency fostered by colonialism and neo-colonialism (Manyara & Jones 2007). Frequently, the values of those who determine what creates anticipated consequences differ from the values of the people living in environments where CBT development takes place. It is therefore questioned whose voice is represented in CBT. Tosun (2000) notes that the redistribution of power is what enables communities to be intentionally included in determining their future. Cornwall (2008) argues that traditional CBT models suppose that communities are requested to participate in spaces created by other agents who do not consider the possibility of communities creating their own spaces. Wearing and McDonald (2002) have confronted the concept of power as being concentrated outside the hands of community and requiring redistribution.

Manyara and Jones (2007) argue that CBT models built on liberal and neo-liberal foundations are unavoidably controlled by influential neo-colonial organisations and individuals. Thus, there exist numerous private sector businesses providing community benefits, as well as independently owned community-based businesses, cooperatives, community associations and businesses provided to the private sector on community-owned reserves (Dodds et al., 2018). Essential to the success of CBT is community participation and community involvement through effective partnerships and cooperation with other significant stakeholders (Digun-Aweto, Fawole & Saayman, 2019; Park, Phandanouvong & Kim, 2018). However, community participation and involvement in CBT is confronted with shortcomings related to limited capacities from members involved in CBT (Imbaya et al., 2019). It is also challenging to achieve appropriate levels of genuine community participation as the approach's validity and practicality in developing countries is uncertain (Bello et al., 2017; Farmaki, 2015). Additionally, community participation models are mostly western-centric and fail to recognise the need to consider specific local conditions for a particular destination (Bello et al., 2016).

### ***Community-based tourism and community participation***

Community-based tourism is often an essential path for economic development and serves as a strategy to contribute to poverty alleviation as well as to foster local community development particularly in the case of developing countries (Park, Phandanouvong & Kim 2018; Runyowa, 2017). It is understood as a segment of tourism development that seeks to reinforce community participation where conventional tourism overlooks and strives to promote community control over tourism development and therefore improves the well-being of community residents (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad 2019). Consequently, CBT requires and promotes community participation, also seeking to deliver extensive community benefits such as employment creation and entrepreneurial opportunities (Mgonja et al., 2015; Burgos & Mertens, 2017: 547; Bittar Rodrigues & Prideaux, 2018: 3).

Community-based tourism places emphasis on the participation of local communities in sustainable tourism planning, development and the management processes of the CBT projects (Mukherjee & Banerjee, 2019; Voda, Jendra & Ruki, 2019). As a result, community participation or involvement in CBT ensures that community interest is represented in the development of the CBT project (Voda et al., 2019). Recognition of the need for community participation in managing natural and cultural resources makes community participation in CBT an increasingly significant aspect (Mgonja et al., 2015). Therefore, to sustain CBT, active participation of community residents is necessary (Kaplan, 2015). This active participation is attainable through granting legal right and the opportunity to participate; access to information; provisioning of adequate resources for individuals to get involved in CBT; involving grassroots rather than selected or elite-oriented involvement; strengthening education and creating constant awareness for host communities, as well as respect for the quality of natural environment and resources (Abukhalifeh & Wondirad, 2019).

More importantly, community participation is concentrated on community control over management and development of tourism ownership and generation of direct financial benefits (Yanes et al., 2019). Community participation minimises negative tourism impacts, encouraging community members to become involved in planning and development, as well as effectively dealing with negative impacts (Bittar Rodrigues & Prideaux, 2018; Ndlovu et al., 2018). Furthermore, the concept increases the local community's toleration for tourism development, promoting cooperation as well as the assurance of the sustainability of CBT development projects (Kihima & Musila, 2019). Therefore, in the absence of effective participation especially from the host community, there is evident risks that any tourism development will become unregulated, unstructured, or disorganised and also probable to be ineffective, leading directly to a range of negative economic, social, and environmental impacts (Moyo & Tichaawa 2017).

Despite the positive contribution of community participation in CBT, community members who participate in CBT projects are rarely given an equal opportunity to evaluate the program or reflect upon their participation levels, as well as the activities and responsibilities that they engage in (Park et al., 2018). Similarly, in South Africa, it is contended that community residents have not adequately participated in nor benefited from CBT projects that largely utilises community assets and natural resources that enhance community livelihoods (Theron, 2017). This is mainly due to community's lack of capacity to contribute meaningfully to their own development hence, they are considered less capable of participating meaningfully in CBT and are excluded due to lack of expertise (Theron, 2017). More importantly, the implementation of community participation approach particularly, in developing countries is not considered in detail and is confronted with numerous challenges (Bello et al., 2017; Tosun, 2000). These challenges include high rates of population growth, increasing income inequity, increasing unemployment, insufficient skilled human resources, as well as low levels of capital growth (Bello et al., 2017; Munikrishnan et al., 2015). Developing countries are also confronted with high levels of control in public administration system, elite domination in political development, high levels of preference and prejudice, inadequate democratic experience as well as lack of awareness amongst the local community towards tourism (Munikrishnan et al., 2015). As a result, community participation specialists stand accused of merely utilising the participation concept to legitimise decisions agreed upon (Bello et al., 2017). More so, community participation in CBT is restricted by an absence of ownership by communities, lack of entrepreneurial skills, insufficient financial and economic resources, reluctance of stakeholders towards power-sharing and a biased tourism board structure (Kala & Bagri, 2018). A lack of tourism education and information also pose a challenge in community participation in CBT, as well as poor professional attitude, seasonality nature of

tourism, power inequalities, locals' distrust in authorities and centralization of authorities (Kala & Bagri, 2018).

Similarly, Tosun (2000) identified three major challenges that impede on community participation in tourism which can also be applied to the sphere of community participation in CBT, namely, operational, structural and cultural limits. As such, operational limits impede on community participation due to the centralization of public administration of tourism development, poor coordination between involved stakeholders as well as poor information made available to the local residents of the tourist destination. Structural limits impede on community participation, generating to attitudes, approaches and perspectives of tourism by specialists, poor proficiency, and a high domination of the elite, lack of appropriate legal system, lack of skilled human resources, relatively high cost of community participation as well as a lack of financial resources. Finally, cultural limits such as limited capacity of underprivileged community residents or grassroots; apathy and low level of awareness about tourism may also occur.

### **Methodology**

This is a conceptual paper based on previous literature and documents, thus based on secondary data. Other researches (see for example Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2020:272) are “compiled from extant academic literature as well as institutional documents and reports.” This article is essentially based on previous academic papers. The variety of papers range from ‘old’ fundamental paper related to issues about community participation such as Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1995) and Tosun (1999, 2000) to more current papers linked to the same issues such as Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2015) and Gumede and Nzama (2019). The inclusion of some ‘old’ literature is relevant and fundamental to the discussion of this paper (such as Arnstein, 1969) in the subject of community participation. The literature used has a global context with few specific South African insights. It is noted that a “conceptual framework draws on concepts from various theories and research findings to guide a research project” (Green, 2014:35). Thus, based on previous research literature this article builds and proposes a spontaneous community participation model for CBT.

### **Results and discussion**

Keeping in mind that disadvantaged community members should be the ones that are protagonists in CBT, from the textual analysis of the study, six core themes emerged and are elaborated in this section, these include:

#### *A general lack of capacity and expertise*

This general theme can be related to various interrelated issues, namely: poor educational background, lack of expertise to participate in CBT, and lack of capacity. Poor educational background of community members makes it difficult for them to take tourism professional related decisions on their own. The educational challenge makes it difficult for the community residents to understand the objectives of tourism-related training programs. Some community members believe that decisions made by specialists are enforced on local community members due to their poor educational background.

Although CBT consist of a variety of facilities and services such as accommodation, transport services, tour guiding, restaurants, entertainment as well as in arts and craft, however, community members are unable to take advantage of the tourism industry due to lack of operational skills or training provided to attain operational skills. Furthermore, a communication gap between tourism-planners and community members makes local people less knowledgeable about tourism, the benefits of tourism as well as the entrepreneurial

opportunities tourism offers. The lack of expertise about tourism and about CBT encourages foreign experts (or possible local elite) to control the CBT context. This impacts negatively on the community empowerment agenda of CBT linkage, since foreign involvement may disempower communities by transferring authority to foreign organizations and creating a reliance on external experts and agencies (Tolkach & King 2015).

Community members in some destinations do not possess tourism business planning, operational and management skills. Moreover, they also lack training in tourism-related customer service, operational excellence and product excellence. Other issues include a lack of concern with knowledge of tourism demand factors, limited knowledge of tourism markets, as well as limited development of tourism collaboration and marketing networks that create barriers to market access. The aforementioned capacity issues relate to operational limits that impede community participation as explained by Tosun (2000). According to the author, the centralisation of public administration of tourism development restricts the influence of community-level groups on the planning process and implementing plans. Moreover, Tosun (2000) emphasises the significance of coordination for the highly fragmented tourism industry among formal organisations, such as between the public and the private sector, as well as between private enterprises. A lack of tourism information distribution also poses challenges for community participation. As a consequence, tourism data is not dispersed to community members in ways that are understandable to them. Moreover, most community residents are not well-informed with regards to tourism development leading to low public involvement. It is important to note that lack of capacity related to CBT has been highlighted also at the institutional level (Giampiccoli, Jugmohan & Saayman, 2014). This lack of capacity at the institutional level can certainly jeopardise the process of CBT development based on community participation.

#### *Poor interpretation and understanding of practical community participation*

The meaning and consequences of participation are poorly understood and agreed upon, to the extent that there is uncertainty about the conditions that enable participation. As a consequence, community participation in CBT is a top-down process that is implemented by the establishment, leaving communities in a passive position, thus discourages active local community involvement. This is due to a lack of commonly agreed, detailed and practical guidelines, particularly when it comes to implementation, evaluating methods as well as evaluating levels of community participation (Park et al., 2018). It is therefore important that the community participation approach is appropriately and accurately interpreted and that its implementation is realistic and comprehensive. Additionally, it is significant that community participation is grounded on an active and voluntary engagement based on the community's thoughts, ideas and inspirations.

#### *Lack of access and understanding of CBT handbooks, manuals and practical guidelines*

CBT experts need to wholly understand the fundamental notions, principles and components of CBT in order to apply the concept appropriately into practice. It is, therefore, significant to gain a better understanding and to adopt the theoretical tools of CBT (the CBT handbooks/manuals/guidelines) that guide the CBT development. Such guidelines provide a step-by-step approach to developing a CBT venture and is generally distributed by government departments such as the CBT operational guidelines summarized by the Department of Tourism (2016). The operational guidelines entail all stages of the process, from venture design to operation. Implementing these guidelines maximises the probabilities of success in a CBT venture. It is also significant that the government work towards an amicable policy framework

with the intent of managing and implementing CBT initiatives while involving all significant stakeholders, particularly indigenous community members.

#### *Lack of empowerment of local communities in decision-making and management*

Community-based tourism requires the government to empower local decision making and management of local tourism businesses. However, a lack of support exists in most CBT initiatives, from the government until a tourism initiative becomes observable. This creates difficulty in developing initiatives from a bottom-up approach. Thus, numerous local community members feel that there is a lack of expressed interest from significant tourism specialist. As a consequence, this hinders the implementation process and encourages community members to form negative opinions pertaining to CBT. It is therefore imperative that community members are able to take matters into their own hands, mobilise their own resources, define their own needs and make their own decisions accordingly.

#### *Lack of financial capital or funding for entrepreneurial CBT ventures*

Community-based tourism requires support from funding programmes and private sector partnership. Community members are willing to invest and participate in CBT related activities, such as accommodation, tour guiding, restaurants, bed and breakfast, arts and crafts, and traditional dancing. However, they are challenged with the lack of financial assistance from the government or private sector partnerships. Thus, discouraging community members to initiate entrepreneurial ventures related to CBT.

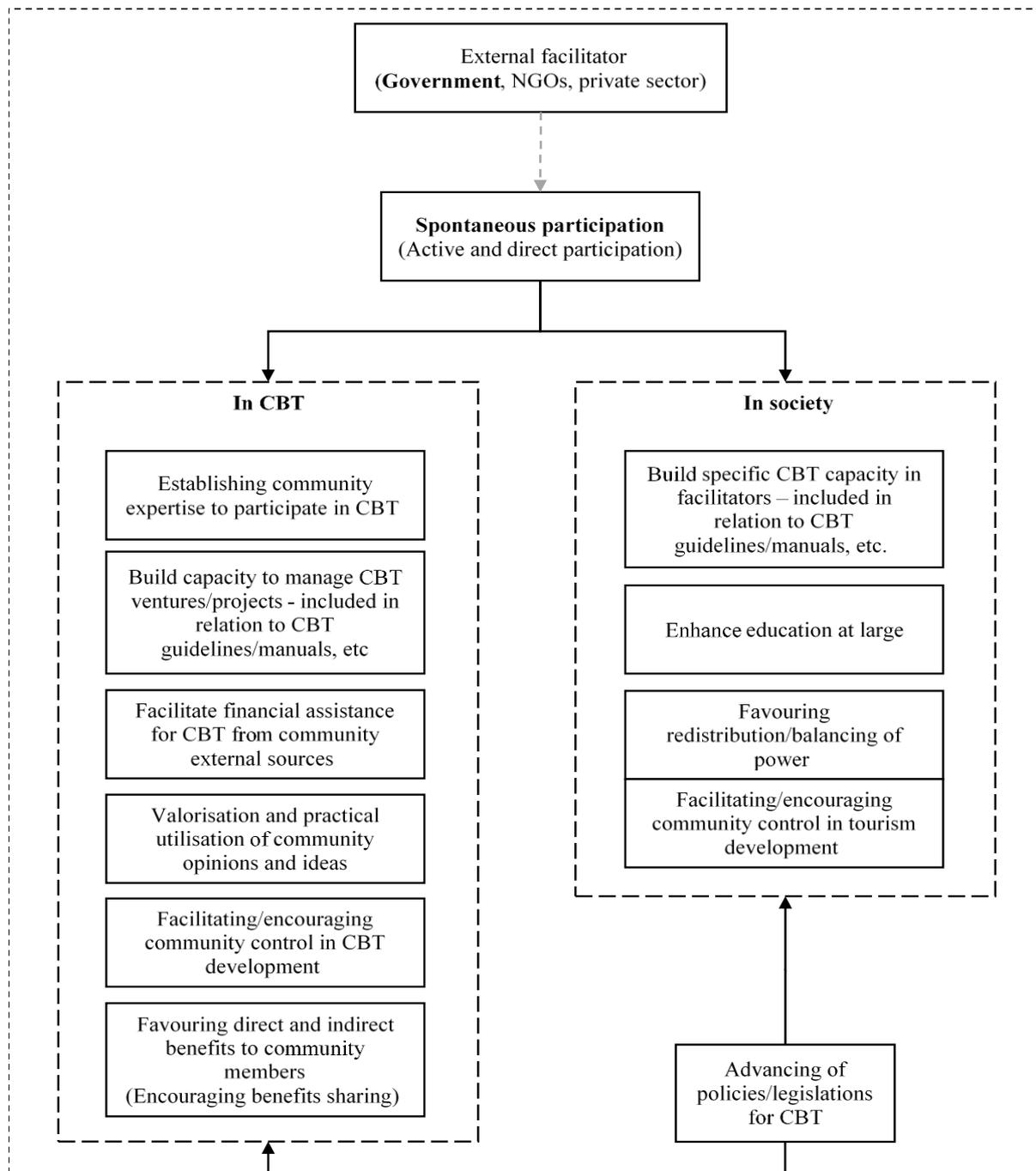
#### *Power inequalities/injustice to participate in CBT*

Community members perceive that tourism development authorities and experts have the capacity to recommend and develop tourism-related activities without their involvement. Poor educational background limits decision making by community members when involved in tourism projects. Although they are encouraged to share their views and opinions, a few select community members are represented at meetings and consultations. Hence, a balance in power is necessary among all stakeholders, this includes traditional authority who is in a position to control decision making. Community-based tourism should therefore be grounded by equal power relations amongst community members, community leaders and tourism experts, representing a concept that is community-driven, where community members are accountable to control tourism infrastructure and facilities available in their environments.

#### *Adopting spontaneous community participation in CBT*

Based on the above, this paper presents a model for adopting spontaneous community participation in community-based tourism (see Figure 1). The model indicates that CBT projects comprise spontaneous community participation and includes a form of bottom-up approach, active and direct action, whereby individuals confront opportunities and take up responsibilities in their localities such as responding to external decisions that influence one's life as well as working in cooperation to resolve collective issues. Therefore, it is important that community members identify communal problems, needs and progressively accept responsibility themselves to plan, manage, control tourism in their locality and assess the collective actions that are proved to be significant. More importantly, spontaneous community participation encourages community members to be aware of their capabilities, build the capacity to manage CBT ventures/projects and is thus based on an empowering process to assist community members to have control over the tourism development process as well as control over CBT projects. Consequently, it is important that community residents are enabled to

influence significant decisions, influence local government activities and meaningfully participate in decision making process. This is significant as, spontaneous community participation is associated with community members’ obtaining complete control in the decision-making process, as noted in the review of literature. More importantly, the proposed model for spontaneous community participation assists to enhance education, resources, opportunities, as well as to build knowledge and capacity included in CBT handbooks, guidelines and manuals to assist community members to determine their own future and to participate in matters that affect their lives.



**Figure 1: Model for adopting spontaneous community participation in community-based tourism**  
 Source: Authors’ elaboration



Community-based tourism depends on external facilitators such as funding agencies or NGOs to provide assistance in CBT ventures, through the provisioning of funds for infrastructure, equipment, training, and marketing. It is therefore imperative, that non-governmental institutions, institutional structures, funding programmes, as well as the private sector, assist community residents in obtaining access to financial and technical resources to contribute to successful CBT. Community control over management and development of CBT enables community ownership and authority over the CBT projects and as a consequence, enables a generation of direct financial benefits such as income generation from tourism as well as attaining the desired social and economic outcomes from the CBT project. Enabling community control over management and development of CBT promotes a balance in power between the powerful and the powerless. This further facilitates social equity, promotes power redistribution and reduces power inequality. More importantly, community control over management and development process diversifies the local economy, generates entrepreneurial opportunities for community members, preserving culture and the environment, provides educational opportunities for community residents, as well as minimizes conflicting interests from local elites. The practical utilisation, integration and translation of community residents' opinions and ideas into action in CBT enable a sense of representation and consideration of community views, thoughts and ideas in tourism activity. It signifies participation and engagement in tourism-related consultation as well as in tourism-related issues of concern. Thus, indicating that an opportunity is provided for effective public consultation.

The model also accentuates that spontaneous participation in CBT is linked to benefit sharing, therefore, it is important that benefit sharing is reasonable and equitable amongst community residents regardless of status. As emphasized in the literature, this will secure and protect economic benefits from tourism and ensure active community participation in tourism planning, implementation, management and revenue distribution. Other benefits pertaining to spontaneous community participation in CBT include capacity building opportunities, obtaining employment from an enhanced skill set and knowledge, safeguarding community development, capacity building, local control and local enterprise development, safeguarding sustainable livelihoods as well as eradicating poverty. Finally, obtaining spontaneous community participation in CBT, enables community residents from different circumstances, to assist in advancement and progression in CBT policies, legislations and in CBT projects through using knowledge, capabilities, ideas and experiences. This will assist to preserve tourism development in communities, eradicate poverty, diversify local livelihoods, improve rural economies and manage natural resources as well as ensuring transparency and openness in CBT.

## **Conclusion**

Various challenges such as lack of operational skills, lack of tourism expertise within the community, lack of entrepreneurial and managerial skills, benefits concentrated on local elites, impede community participation in CBT. As a consequence of the challenges, the current study proposes that community participation in CBT should be grounded on a spontaneous participatory approach that promotes active and direct community participation in CBT. This approach is built upon the practical utilisation, integration and translation of community opinions and ideas in the pursuit of tourism-based development, which is transformed into action to create a positive influence in CBT projects. Implementing the proposed model for spontaneous participation in CBT assists community members to be accountable for CBT planning, implementation and management including control in tourism-related decision making.

The model is also grounded on encouraging benefit-sharing, enabling community members to acquire collective benefits from CBT including employment opportunities, diversification of income, enhancing local expertise and institutions. More importantly, as reflected in the current study, the model is grounded on redistribution and balance of power, eradicating power injustice and vested interests, particularly from the local elites. It is, therefore, significant that proposed CBT ventures apply a spontaneous community participatory approach to safeguard community control in CBT related decision-making and to ensure openness and unambiguous transmission of benefits from CBT. To tackle the concern of insignificant and inadequate education and expertise acquisition, community members participating in CBT ventures should collaborate with relevant education authorities such as the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) in South Africa. This collaboration will promote access to tourism-related education and skills training, enhancing opportunities for community members to access work in the tourism sector. Community members also need to create networks with small enterprises in order to obtain exposure to tourists and benefit from capacity building in business skills, marketing, promotions and advertising thus creating linkages with CBT associations. More importantly, community members should incorporate community development objectives. The objectives can either be social, economic or based on environmental obligations. Social and economic objectives include assisting in the construction of schools, raising donations for underprivileged schools, providing alternatives for water accessibility to community residents such as rainwater harvesting, encouraging entrepreneurship, training locals to be employed as tour guides and employing indigenous community members to share local knowledge and history with tourists. Environmental goals include conservation projects; waste management; provisioning of a catalogue for flora and fauna for nature interpretation; farming; reforestation; using traditional and sustainable natural resources; as well as recycling. These efforts are significant in enhancing the CBT image, attaining community-driven goals for CBT as well as to assist in retaining and preserving community resources for tourism purposes.

Furthermore, and fundamentally, this paper does not aim to idealise CBT (challenges and problems in CBT are certainly present) and it is not against the more often than not, the necessary role of external entities (especially government role is seen as fundamental) in facilitating CBT projects. However, this paper maintains that the facilitation should assist the community in the ‘background’ to favour the birth and development of spontaneous participation where CBT projects are fully originated, controlled, developed and managed by local (particularly disadvantaged) community members. Beyond that, spontaneous participation that is independently originated controlled, developed and managed by local community members remains an ideal, as much, difficult objective to achieve, an objective to which this paper attempts to give a contribution for its achievement. More research on independent, spontaneous, community participation is certainly welcome to enhance the chances to find a solution for a more genuine CBT development. This is a conceptual article, intrinsically representing a positive position but also represents its limitations. Hence, the limitations can be summarised as a possible need to adjust the model to various specific realities and to include the specific parameters and limits and methodologies of interventions of external actors (often required) in spontaneous community participation in CBT. Further studies that also include empirical research can also assist to adjust and improve this model.

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