



Community Based Tourism Management Experience in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka, even though tourism is not new, its potential in delivering benefits to the local community is still a subject of great debate. The problem central to this study evolves from this scenario. The study investigates the successful management of community based tourism (CBT) in Sri Lanka taking four community based tourism projects as a sample: Heeloya, Padawigampola, Panama and Rekawa. The auxiliary objectives of this study are: a) to identify the contributory factor for CBT development in Sri Lanka; b) to examine the most suitable CBT products in Sri Lanka; c) to identify the strategies to promote CBT in Sri Lanka; and d) to make recommendations on successful promotion of CBT in Sri Lanka. This exploratory study employs a qualitative methodology and followed a case study approach which allows the use of mixed-method techniques for the data collection. Five main stakeholders of Sri Lankan CBT industry were approached to reach the captioned objectives. The key data collection tools employed in this study are interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and observations. The findings are then analyzed in both quantitative and descriptive approaches. The significant findings of this study reveals that the main contributory factors for CBT development in Sri Lanka are attractions, institutional factors, and successful implementation of CBT concepts. Also, the most promising CBT products identified through this study are local cuisines, tourists focused activities and natural attractions. In addition, the strategies to promote CBT in Sri Lanka are presented in both conceptual approach and practical approach. The final recommendation of this study proposes a model for community based tourism development in Sri Lanka with three main steps: research process, building process and backing-up process.

KEYWORDS: *attractions, community based tourism, tourism*

1. Introduction

Community based tourism is becoming increasingly popular in developmental circles worldwide as a means of contributing towards rural development and poverty alleviation. There have been successes and failures in CBT development in Sri Lanka to date with untapped tourism potential in rural communities. In Sri Lanka, the communities are non-other than on lookers on tourism development. They have no awareness, receive either no or less benefits and bear no responsibility in tourism development in their own villages. One of the main reasons for this dilapidated situation is the absence of literature in Sri Lankan context on community based tourism. Successful international experiences of CBT provide valuable blueprints and knowledge, but cannot be adapted easily and completely within the Sri Lankan context since different communities are surrounded by different contexts and environments, which in turn bring different outcomes of CBT. Typically, CBT in international contexts has been used as an effective tool for poverty alleviation by using tourism as a source of additional income for local people. On the other hand, it may be a different story in Sri Lanka. The results of this study will help policy makers develop strategies suited for the situations and problems in local villages. Then, determinants contributing to the successful management of CBT will be sought after.

2. Statement of problem

There have been no empirical studies undertaken to develop a strategic integrated framework capable of identifying and integrating the local communities' participation and the nature of the benefits to be derived from tourism activities. Lack of scientific knowledge regarding the factors affecting successful promotion of CBT development in Sri Lanka is of a great issue. Successful international experiences of CBT provide valuable blueprints and knowledge, but cannot be adapted easily and completely within the Sri Lankan context since different communities are surrounded by different contexts and environments, which in turn bring different outcomes of CBT. This study thus looks in to one central issue: what is the Sri Lankan experience in community based tourism management?

3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the contributory factor for CBT development in Sri Lanka
2. To examine the most suitable CBT products in Sri Lanka
3. To identify the strategies to promote CBT in Sri Lanka
4. To make recommendations on successful promotion of CBT in Sri Lanka.

4. Review of literature

4.1 Definitions of community based tourism

Community based tourism is a new paradigm in modern tourism & most of the new world tourists are now demanding community-based experiences from their tour planners. Different scholars have defined community-based tourism (CBT) in different ways.

Simpson (2008) defines CBT as “a model which centers on ownership, management and control of tourism projects by the local community”. The Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (1997) defines CBT more rigorously as, “tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life”. World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) (2001) defines CBT as a form of tourism “where 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.” WWF accepted that the concept of community depends on local “social and institutional structures” and accepted that it “must also embrace individual initiatives within the community”.

Moscardo (2008) viewed CBT as an alternative form of tourism, which aims to maximize benefits to local people and achieve community development objectives through building community capacity and empowerment. CBT is a new paradigm in tourism industry. According to Boronyak et. al. (2010) “the term Community Based Tourism emerged in the mid 1990's. CBT is generally small scale and involves interactions between visitor and host community, particularly suited to rural and regional areas. CBT is commonly understood to be managed and owned by the community, for the community. It is a form of 'local' tourism, favoring local service providers and suppliers and focused on interpreting and communicating the local culture and environment. It has been pursued and supported by communities,

local government agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs)”.

Hatton (2002) identified the community tourism industry as the collection of businesses that creates and sells a variety of goods and services to visitors. The development of these industries is a growing phenomenon as communities respond to the opportunities, and in some cases the threats, of tourism (Hatton, 2002). Considering above definitions on CBT the researcher defines community based tourism as “the ownership and management of community tourism assets and enterprises, wholly or in part, by the local community”.

4.2 Principles of community based tourism

As many other industries CBT is developed on set of theories and concepts. Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project (Suansri, 2003) identified some principles through which host community can use tourism as a tool for community development. According to Suansri, CBT should:

- i. Recognize, support and promote community ownership of tourism;
- ii. Involve community members from the start in every aspect;
- iii. Promote community pride;
- iv. Improve the quality of life;
- v. Ensure environmental sustainability;
- vi. Preserve the unique character and culture of the local area;
- vii. Foster cross-cultural learning;
- viii. Respect cultural differences and human dignity;
- ix. Distribute benefits fairly among community members;
- x. Contribute a fixed percentage of income to community projects.

Other than Suansri, many scholars have identified same principles of CBT in different ways. Tosun (2000) said, “active community participation in the development of their tourism industry is central to CBT and it is also seen as a development strategy that is based on community resources, needs and decisions”. In addition to that, Choi & Sirakaya (2006) stated, “Once tourism is developed, the community will then actively control and manage their tourism industry, thus allowing for greater benefits to be retained within the community”. Further to that the same authors mentioned “community participation, involvement and sense of ownership are essential elements to the sustainability, viability and success of CBT”.

4.3 Key performance indicators of community based tourism

Lucchetti & Font (2013) identified some key performance indicators which were developed using the literature, contextualized in the analysis of the project to be studied, to assess impact and to evaluate the initiative implementation and its commercial viability. The idea is to look beyond impact in order to understand what may have caused it, with the final purpose of identifying their transferability and best practice processes. This includes non-financial impacts of tourism and is particularly suitable for use in rural communities where assets of non-financial nature are also vital for livelihood security. One of the advantages of this method is that it provides a deeper view on how tourism can benefit rural communities that goes beyond cash contributions, taking into account what the impact means to poor people’s lives (Mitchell and Ashley, 2010).

Table 4.1: Key performance indicators of CBT

Implementation	
Planning	i. Strategic plan including sound business plan ii. Monitoring and evaluation
Partnership	i. NOGs ii. Private sector iii. Government
Community assets	i. Tourism assets ii. Will to engage in tourism iii. Available skills
Funding / Micro-credits	i. Funding invested to date ii. Microcredits to the weavers
Commercial viability	

Market	i. Size, seasonality ii. Length of stay iii. Visitor expenditure
Product	i. Location, physical access ii. Profitability iii. Visitor satisfaction
Link with private sector	i. Market access ii. Business advice, training
Impact	
Impact on livelihood	i. Income ii. Non-wage impacts iii. Opportunity cost
Other impacts	i. Standard of living ii. Local economic development iii. Collective benefits

Source: Lucchetti & Font (2013)

4.4 Benefits of community-based tourism

At present, the governments of most countries with popular tourist attractions are moving in to CBT considering its' socio-cultural, economic & environmental benefits. Many scholars also have identified CBT as a successful model in developing rural communities. Kiss (2004) stated "community based tourism has been popular as a means of supporting biodiversity conservation particularly in developing countries and linking livelihoods with preserving biodiversity whilst reducing rural poverty and achieving both objectives sustainably". Boronyak et. al. (2010) spoke widely about the benefits of CBT. According to him, "CBT may enhance social sustainability by empowering local communities to manage their own resources, provide meaningful employment, and assist with capacity building and cultural preservation. Environmental benefits include income generation for communities to actively protect their land from degradation and could enhance conservation efforts to attract tourists especially with regard to eco-tourism initiatives".

4.5 Challenges in community based tourism

It is a known fact that communities which practice CBT suffer from its own problems & challenges. If stakeholders can identify such problems at the planning & implementation stage, they can probably be managed.

Cottrell (2001) identified both benefits & threats of CBT. The threats are:

- i. alienation and loss of cultural identity;
- ii. creation of frictions within the community (between generations / subgroups);
- iii. disruption of socio-economic structures;
- iv. conflicts over use of resources (land, hunting rights, infrastructure) which may also create hostility towards tourists;
- v. disturbance to local environments e.g. for building accommodations or to obtain firewood, pollution of water and air.

Most of the CBT sites are located in remoted areas. Graci (2008) mentioned "inadequate resources are associated with initial funding sources and opportunities for training to develop skills, knowledge and expertise related to tourism". Therefore it has been a hard job to develop the manpower needed for CBT. Cooper (2004) mentioned a similar thing about lack of resources. According to him "lack of training resources leads to a lack of local capacity to properly manage or administer their tourism businesses, hindering the success of CBT". Choi and Sirakaya (2006) stated "lack of funding as a chronic problem in tourism development, most particularly in rural communities in developing countries". Tosun (2000) also mentioned lack of financial resources as a main threat to CBT. He stated "lack of financial resources and training will limit or discourage community participation in the tourism development process, which is crucial to the success of CBT development". Graci (2008) identified "lack of proper infrastructure" as another barrier faced by communities. Lack of marketing is another main constrain to establishing a viable tourism industry in rural communities and stem from the first barrier identified: inadequate resources. Cooper (2004) identifies that a lack of marketing capacity and lack of knowledge on how the marketing structure operates have caused CBT projects in the Caribbean to suffer. Blackstock (2005) identified three failings of CBT in addressing the community development agenda: (1) lack of intent to transform the community; (2) not acknowledging the heterogeneity of

community; (3) lack of local control and empowerment, as CBT is constrained by national and global tourism development.

5. Methodology

This study utilized a case study approach to address the core research problem of “what is the Sri Lankan experience in community based tourism management?” In the process of finding solutions to the above problem the researcher implemented a case study approach with selection of four community based tourism sites in Sri Lanka: Heeloya, Padawigampola, Panama and Rekawa. Five key stakeholders of these projects were identified to collect primary data including international tourists, community members, public sector officers, non-governmental organization officers, researchers and scholars.

Data were gathered from international tourists by distribution of structured questionnaires. 120 responses were received and processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) programme and assessment with statistical methods. To collect data from the experts and scholars online questionnaires were developed using Google forms and 20 responses were received and processed. The sampling method was convenient sampling considering the nature and the type of data needed. 12 focus group discussions were conducted with community based tourism officers, community members and with the villagers to identify the present situation of CBT in each village. Also, the participatory observation allowed the researcher to get an insight idea of the inherent problems of each CBT organization. The findings were mainly analysed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and in descriptive terms. The findings are finally presented in descriptive terms using bar charts, pie charts, columns, percentages and in descriptive paragraphs.

6. Results and discussion

The main aim of this study is to identify successful management of community based tourism in Sri Lanka and to determine key contributory factors for CBT development with identifying the most promising CBT product in each of CBT sites concerned. To gain a broader understanding of the community based tourism situation in Sri Lanka both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied.

This thesis contributes to community based tourism studies by clarifying and understanding the core concept of CBT held by professionals; establishing points of agreement towards the concept from the main stakeholders’ perspectives; and recommending directions for future successful CBT development. The stakeholder work is conducted in Sri Lankan context. It is hoped that the findings can be initially generalized for CBT development to other destinations in Sri Lanka at the inception stage. The findings identified the meaning and core concepts underlying community based tourism including its advantages and disadvantages; initial steps that should be implemented; and successful criteria for evaluation. The study of communities’ perspectives reveals that although similarities occur in the agreement about CBT, the uniqueness of each community should also be considered when implementing the development. This is very much linked to the findings of Sirakaya et al. (2002) in their study of residents’ support for tourism development in Ghana.

6.1 Contributory factors for CBT development in Sri Lanka

The research mainly focused on identifying the contributory factors for CBT development in Sri Lanka. Four main factors were identified through previous studies that affect CBT development in Sri Lanka: attractions, institutional factors, CBT concepts and other factors. The questionnaire findings surprisingly revealed that all four main factors more or less equally contribute for CBT development in Sri Lanka (see figure 6.1).

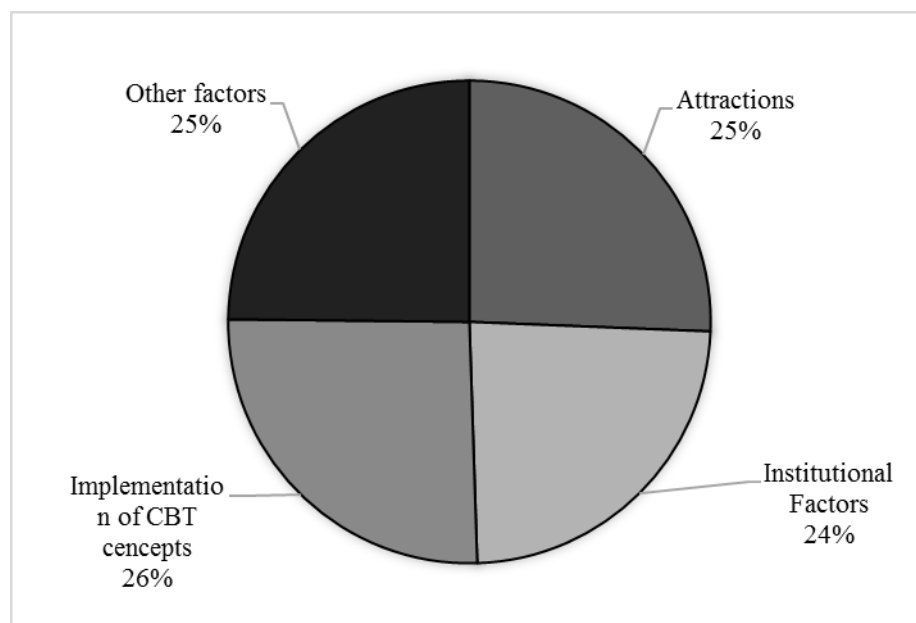


Figure 6.1: Contributory factors for CBT development in Sri Lanka (Survey data, 2015)

The factors investigated under attractions are: natural attractions, man-made attractions, tourists focused activities, and tours and excursion. The institutional factors being considered are: even and wide profit distribution, income sources and their sustainability, expertise support, marketing and promotion, training and development and favorable policies. CBT concepts that contribute for the CBT development are: availability of a CBT organization, community participation, community leadership, English and other language knowledge, ICT knowledge, hospitality of the community and attitude of the locals. The other factors include: easy access to the destination, availability of accommodation, basic infrastructure, basic amenities, arrival of tourists, and safety of the visitors. In finding the most promising attraction that contribute to the CBT development in Sri Lanka four main attractions were identified and put together to expertise views. Accordingly 30 percent of the respondents indicated that ‘tours and excursions’ as the most important contributory factor for CBT development in Sri Lanka. Subsequent attractions are natural attractions (28 percent), tourist focused activities (20 percent) and man-made attractions (20 percent).

Many institutional factors are contributing to the CBT development in Sri Lanka. The most important contributory factor is the ‘favorable policies’ that has 20 percent response from the target sample. Other institutional factors including ‘training and development, expertise support, income sources and their sustainability, even and wide profit distribution have almost equal level contribution of 16 percent for CBT development in Sri Lanka. However, the experts have downgraded the contribution made by marketing and promotion that comes to 14 percent in total. The findings on contribution made by CBT concepts are scattered and is similar to international context. Out of all the factors identified, attitude of the locals has been identified as the main CBT contributory factor with 18 percent contribution. Other than that hospitality of the community and availability of a CBT organization have been ranked second most important factors with 17 percent response. Further, availability of a strong community leadership also has a significant value of 15 percent out of total responses. In addition to that both community participation and language knowledge has 13 percent and 12 percent value proving the importance of CBT concepts as contributory factors.

Other contributory factors that could not be put in to above three categories are summarized as other factors. The results indicate that availability of accommodation as the most important contributory factor with 21 percent total value. Arrival of tourists has been marked as the second most important other contributory factor with 18 percent value. Safety of the visitors and easy access to the destination have been mapped as equally important contributory factors that has 15 and 16 percent value respectively. Above figure further explains of the contribution made by basic amenities and infrastructure for CBT development of the country.

6.2 Most promising CBT products in Sri Lanka

The second objective of this research is to identify the most promising CBT product in Sri Lanka. In order to achieve this objective a questionnaire was developed and distributed among 120 tourists who visited selected four CBT sites in Sri Lanka. The tourism products were classified in to four main areas: local cuisines, tourist focused activities, natural attractions, tangible cultural attractions and intangible cultural attractions. The summary of the findings are exhibited in figure 6.2.

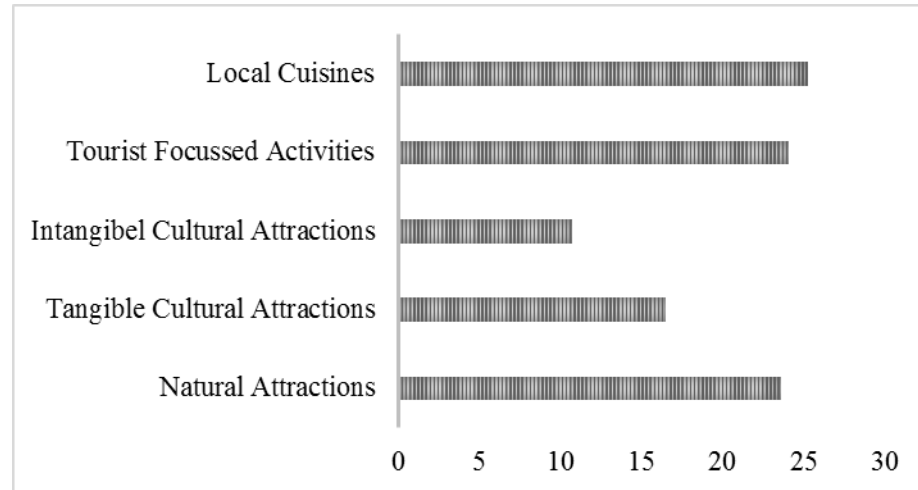


Figure 6.2: Most promising CBT products in Sri Lanka (Survey data, 2015)

The findings reveal that most promising CBT product in Sri Lanka to be local cuisines with 25 percent of value of the total responses. Tourists focused activities and natural attractions are closely following local cuisines with 24 and 23 value percentages. Those are the main areas the CBT practitioners must look at when developing a next CBT project. Tangible cultural attractions and intangible cultural attractions also have a considerable attention of the tourists with 16 and 10 percent value (see figure 5.8). As explained in the preceding section the tourists had identified local cuisines as the most promising CBT product in Sri Lanka. However, different cuisines related activities got different preferences as per the questionnaire findings. Enjoying local food has been the most promising product with 28 percent of preferences out of total tourists' preferences for local cuisines. Similar preferences are there for cooking, fishing and angling, and open air food and beverage serving with 18 to 19 percent values. 16 percent of the total respondents identified traditional farming as a more promising CBT product.

Tourists focused activities are prime attractions in any destination. However as far as Sri Lankan CBT sector considered, tourists focused activities have been ranked second best after local cuisines. According to the questionnaire findings, the most popular tourists focused activity has been photography with 25 percent value. Trekking and tracking, and village walk have secondary preferences with 24 and 21 percent preferences. Teaching English to village students, bird watching and adventure sports are some more activities preferred by the tourists. The CBT planners and the CBT organizations may further focus when introducing more activities to the tourists as they all are not equally demanded by the tourists. Rather, they should more vigilantly expand existing tourists' activities that have a higher demand. Sri Lanka is a destination with lot of greenery around. Most of the tourists visiting Sri Lanka is fond of this green and tend to spend more time at destinations where they can experience and enjoy the natural attractions. The research findings reveals that 28 percent of the total tourist population has preferred Sri Lanka as a green destination. The distribution of the captioned 28 percent. Accordingly the most promising natural CBT product has been flora & fauna with 31 percent value. In addition to flora and fauna, the tourists are further interested in enjoying view points (26 percent) and water resources (22 percent) at the CBT sites they visited. Sri Lankan weather also has some stronghold to tourists as 16 percent of them have responded positively on the same.

The taste and preference of tourists' is being changed over the last decade and now they are more interested in learning others cultures. Learning other cultures can be easily done through visiting other destinations. Although cultural attractions in Sri Lankan rurality is not the prime CBT product, there are some tourists visiting the sites with the interest of experiencing tangible cultural attractions. Amongst them, arts and handicraft has been the primary tangible attraction with 49 percent of value. In addition

to that ancient temples have 31 percent preference and 20 percent preference for historic monuments. Intangible cultural attractions includes any tradition, practice, rituals, or even stories that comes from generation to generation. Although much tourists are not fond of intangible cultural heritage, there is a tourist segment with a great upward potential visiting Sri Lankan CBT sites with the intention of experiencing the intangible attractions. Out of many choices produced to the tourists, traditional industries has been the most promising intangible cultural attraction in Sri Lanka with 41 percent of value. Also, indigenous Ayurveda practices has a significant choice with 23 percent value. Yoga and meditation and rural festivals have got equal importance with 10 percent value adding folk stories and local language to the bottom of the list with 9 and 7 percent value respectively.

6.3 Strategies to promote CBT in Sri Lanka

6.3.1 *Strategies to promote CBT in Sri Lanka – conceptual approach*

The third main objectives of this thesis is to identify strategies for successful community based tourism promotion in Sri Lanka which is emphasized as the third aim of this research. The suggestions for the future development in this section are: to consider the communities' expectations; an evaluation of successful CBT implementation; and the first steps for future development. Understanding the gaps or problems of the present situation could direct development. As stated by Butler (1999) that there are significant gaps between the concept as described in many plans and what actually appears. It can be argued that it is the lack of understanding and information about the nature of tourism which prevents the goals being achieved. Wheeler (1993 cited in Richards, and Hall, 2000) indicated that in many parts of the world there remains a major policy to implementation gap. That is there are inadequate links between the ideal of sustainable community-based tourism development and its application. A major error which policy makers have often made with respect to tourism is to treat the industry in isolation from the other factors which constitute the social, environmental and economic fabric of communities (Richards and Hall, 2000). To make this point clearer, the community expectations can be compared to the suggested successful criteria. The gap can be seen as or community based tourism goal setting for future development. The comparison is provided in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Present CBT problems and directions for successful development

Present Problem	Future Development
Need fair benefits distribution and poverty reduction	Fair income distribution and benefits to a community
Need for clarity of stakeholders' role especially a government	Practice an integrated cooperation
Need for support especially when problems occurring	Support by every stakeholder involved
Need for practical community involvement at all levels and awareness of the concept	Maintain community involvement and provide education and awareness program
Need for community environmental conservation	Environmental and resource consecration
Need for community cultural and identity conservation	Community cultural conservation and the exchange of cultures
Need for professional marketing and promotion	Gain tourist satisfaction and effective marketing and promotion
Need for clear goal and plan before the development and during the management	Have effective management system

Source: Survey data, 2015

The differences between the list above and the research findings are small in scale and partly involve wordings and repetition. Typically, the factors that need to be considered in planning for CBT include: environmental concerns; market issues; financial factors; social/institutional issue; and skills or human resource concerns (The Mountain Institute, 2000).

6.3.2 *What factors create successful CBT?*

In this study, many criteria for general CBT evaluation were identified and tested. The most important among all criteria are community involvement and fair distribution of income and benefits to a community. The results in every study confirm that without these two major criteria, CBT implementation cannot become successful. Other successful components, although not as prominent as

those two criteria, should not be neglected. Community cultural and environmental resources should also be maintained to sustain community uniqueness. This success will affect another important successful criteria which is to create a good image for tourism and promote cultural exchange. Additionally, a destination cannot succeed without every stakeholders' support and cooperation which leads to effective CBT management. The main elements of management were suggested to be in form of community education and awareness programs and marketing and promotion especially when the community is at an initial stage of tourism development. A partnership form of management was seen as desirable in order to achieve successful tourism.

6.3.3 *Priorities for CBT success criteria*

The success criteria suggested from the findings are presented in table 5.8 in order of the priority of emphases from the responses. It can be noticed that the content is consistent with the above future directions suggested for CBT development.

Table 6.2: Priorities for CBT success criteria

1st Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve a community - Distribute income and benefits to a community
2nd Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain community's life style and culture - Conserve community environmental resources - Impress tourists - Exchange of cultures - Support by all stakeholders
3rd Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated cooperation - Provide educational program to a community
4th Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective management - Effective marketing and promotion

Source: Survey data, 2015

6.3.4 *Strategies to promote CBT in Sri Lanka – practical approach*

The previous section of this study emphasized on promoting CBT in Sri Lanka in a conceptual approach. However, conceptual approach alone is not sufficient to address the present needs of the CBT projects in Sri Lanka provided the complexity of the operations. Thus the practical issues faced by the community members are identified in the previous section and solutions and given aligning to the tourists' and experts' questionnaire findings. The figure 6.3 explain how these conclusions are drawn combining the previous findings of this study.

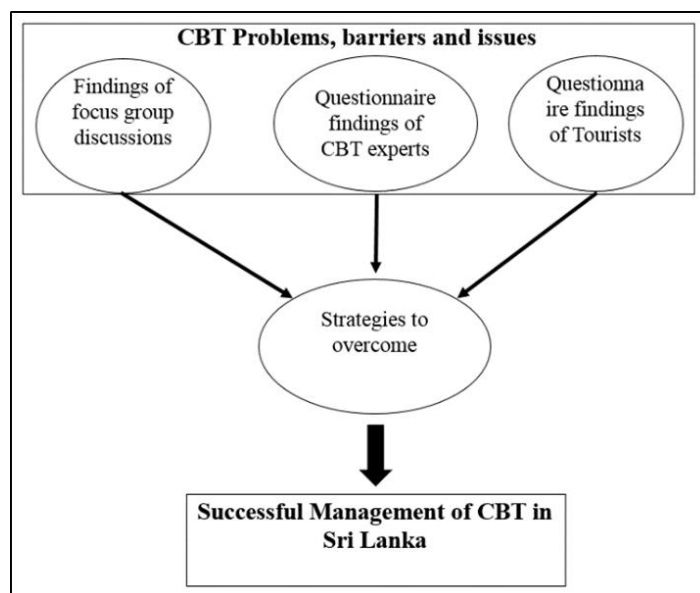


Figure 6.3: Successful Management of CBT in Sri Lanka (Survey data, 2015)

6.3.5 Development of attractions

Butler (1999) identified attractions as one of the main motives for people to travel. The study revealed that it is Sri Lankan natural attractions and tours and excursions being offered by the communities as the prime CBT attractions of the country. Therefore necessary actions need to be taken to further improve Sri Lankan natural attractions and more tours and excursions should be organized in local context. In addition to that every CBT site investigated in this research possess unique attractions that need to be promoted with great emphasis. Table 5.9 list the attractions of each village that has a great potential to develop the sites.

Table 6.3: Most promising attractions in Sri Lanka CBT sites

CBT site	Most promising attraction
Heeloya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local cuisines - Tourists' focused activities - Natural attractions
Padawigampola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tangible cultural attractions - Tourists' focused activities - Local cuisines
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local cuisines - Tangible cultural attractions - Tourists' focused activities
Rekawa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural attractions - Tourists' focused activities - Local cuisines

Source: Survey data, 2015

When evaluating the above table, which is the cumulative findings of tourists' questionnaires it can be noted that local cuisines, tourist focused activities and natural attractions as the key attractions for CBT development in Sri Lanka.

6.3.6 Other strategies

The other strategies identified for successful management of CBT in Sri Lanka are as follows:

1. Proper management of community based tourism association;
2. Encouraging community participation;
3. Identifying and strengthening community leaders;
4. Even and wide distribution of profit;
5. Identifying new income sources and sustaining existing income;
6. Obtaining expertise support;
7. Training and development;
8. Marketing and promotion.

7. Conclusion and recommendation

This research contributes to community based tourism studies by clarifying and understanding the core concept of CBT held by professionals; establishing points of agreement towards the concept from the main stakeholders' perspectives; and recommending directions for future successful CBT development. The stakeholder work is conducted in Sri Lankan context. It is hoped that the findings can be initially generalized for CBT development to other destinations in Sri Lanka at the inception stage. The findings identified the meaning and core concepts underlying community based tourism including its advantages and disadvantages; initial steps that should be implemented; and successful criteria for evaluation. The study of communities' perspectives reveals that although similarities occur in the agreement about CBT, the uniqueness of each community should also be considered when implementing the development. This is very much linked to the findings of Sirakaya et al. (2002) in their study of residents' support for tourism development in Ghana.

The implications of this study are as follows:

1. The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and other related organizations including public and private needs to support, evaluate and monitor ecotourism and CBT development in the Sri Lanka. The tourism policy and legislation should be structured in such

a way as to encourage record keeping for research purposes as well as allowing continuous updating of the tourism knowledge base in the reserve and its surroundings.

2. The non-governmental sector and CBT practitioners needs to alter its approach towards tourism development, planning and implementation in Sri Lanka. The CBT sites should adhere to the community strengthening concept in order to unlock the economic potential in the provincial development initiatives. This concept must be encouraged and implemented by skilful personnel in order to maximize community participation and economic potential in the area investigated.
3. For community based tourism to materialize in the Heeloya, Padawigapola, Panama, Rekawa and the surrounding areas, the communities should develop a pool of resources, including human capital, financial support, marketing exposure and ownership of tourism projects. These communities must be actively involved in each and every stage of tourism planning and development in order to ensure that all their tourism projects and products are integrated into the reserve's programmed for visitors, e.g. traditional dance and food festivals.
4. Anthropologists, economists, environmental specialists, politicians, and sociologists must develop a better understanding the dynamics of rural communities. They should familiarize themselves with the latter's behaviour, attitudes, norms and values as well as with the way in which rural people approach the idea of development leading to a sustainable livelihood.
5. The local communities must be listened to and involved in development programs or projects in their village right from the start. This process will represent a significant step forward in ensuring more adequate community participation in tourism.

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