Community-based tourism (CBT) for sustainable tourism: A market-orientated product, case study of villages in Bali, Indonesia

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Efforts to sustain and preserve the globe have been made by people around the world. The United Nation, many organizations, and individuals are collaborating toward achieving this goal. Sustainability as a goal, implicates the wellbeing of the ecospher and particularly for a better living experience for present and future generations. Thus sustainability is an underlying principle in many sectors. The concept of sustainability first appeared in the report of the World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 entitled "Our Common Future". The WCED defined sustainable development as a development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" (in Choi and Sirakaya, 2005: 1275).

In recent years the concern about the sustainability of the planet earth has been escalated, and people have responded by seeking a more sustainable venture in many aspects of their life. Choi and Sirakaya (2005) point out that the term has become a popular concept used in various fields, including tourism. At first Sustainable Tourism (ST) was regarded as the opposite to Mass Tourism; more recently, both are considered as a continuum concept, and ST is treated as a goal for all types of tourism development ( Lu & Nepal, 2009).

Tourism, which has become one of the largest global industries (Roe and Khanya, 2001; Dowling, 2003), with the expectation of 1.6 billion international arrivals by 2020 (UNWTO, 2011: 11) has adopted the principle of sustainability in anticipation to the destructive tendency of mass tourism.

CBT is one form of alternative tourism that favors sustainability had become a core of attention during the ITB Berlin Forum which taking a theme 'Wisdom of Old Ways' (Muqbil, 2010). CBT aims at small-scale tourism development using the community traditional life and the rural environment as a principal attraction, emphasizing the involvement of the local people as key players during its planning and implementation. Thus the impact will go directly to the community; any benefit is expected to be used as resources for the village development. Telfer & Sharpley (2008) characterized CBT as tourism: which attraction is related to community life, culture and heritage; highlights community involvement in planning and implementation; promotes sustainable environment and local culture; means of community development, and is for special interest tourists.
Apart from the obstacles that arise during the process, CBT promotes sustainable tourism. The market niche for this type of tourism is: people want to live close to nature and experience an authentic way of life; therefore, CBT facilitates their way to find meaning in life.

CBT is rooted in the concept of sustainable tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005). As awareness of the importance of community life for the wellbeing of its members increases, CBT becomes a popular concept (Luloff, 2003). Community life sometimes becomes a value missed by the people in developed countries (Jason, 1997; Edgemond, 2007).

Edgemond (2007) stated that one of the causes of unsuccessful tourism development is the failure in identifying the market segment and their needs. The motivation of developing tourism for the area development could also become a pitfall; while development connotes change, people must know how far to change because change could override authenticity and sustainability, the very thing the CBT tourists seek.

Regarding the change occurring in CBT villages, the ideal development is to preserve the culture, tradition, and natural environment while embracing the opportunity to develop, and satisfying the tourists needs. The CBT community must have a good understanding of CBT to be able to respond properly and take control. One of the critical issues for CBT is the development of products that satisfy the tourists, whilst also accommodating the interest of the community and the natural environment.

The research reported in this paper assesses the tourists’ expectations regarding CBT products which feature sustainability for the community and their environment. The research is based on case studies of Penglipuran, Tihingan, Belimbing and Bedulu village in Bali, Indonesia. Nine aspects of CBT product are assessed: 1. Attraction, 2. Travel services arrangement, 3. Transportation/Access, 4. Accommodation, 5. Food and Beverage, 6. Merchandise, 7. Packaging, 8. Amenity, 9. People/Awareness. A focus on sustainability is accommodated on the tenth entry of ‘Change & Development and Authenticity’.

A qualitative study using two focus-group discussions and three in-depth interviews with CBT tourists has been conducted. Data were classified using Nvivo as a tool, and subsequently analyzed and interpreted.

The results showed there are different types of CBT tourists: the first type wants to merge in the life of the local people, and the second wants to take a snap-shot of village life, taking it as a day tour while staying in a tourist resort. The first type required very basic facilities as they express: “don’t care about luxury, just the most important things like toilet and clean room.”. Both seek authentic village life in their rural environment as the main attraction.
Regarding the aspect of ‘change and development and authenticity’: most visitors were content that villagers change toward a better and healthier way of life; cleanliness and hygiene have been the main issue. Tools that will ease the work are recommended while retaining the quality, the craft and traditional aspect. One research participant said tourists do not go to the village to watch the people having a hard life; they are pleased if tourism could help, and want to develop ‘friendship’ with the host.

Regarding authenticity, most participants stated that villagers should retain the aspects that characterized the uniqueness of the village such as: art, architecture, rural environment and its footpath, traditional celebration, some traditional economic activities.

The CBT products do not require sophistication and high investment, because the CBT tourists who choose to stay in the village need only basic tourism facilities and services that emphasize keeping clean and hygiene. They want to enjoy the authentic village life the way they are. However, information and communication regarding the CBT villages must be made available to the potential market. It is apparent that CBT has a potential to become a solution for sustainability and simultaneously functioning as a means of community development.