

The Future of Tourism Lies in Communities

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ABSTRACT

Educational tourism has emerged as a transformative tool for rural development, promoting This study explores the potential of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a sustainable model for educational tourism development. Drawing on data from five countries; Indonesia, Australia, Mexico, India, and Argentina. The research investigates the interplay between cultural preservation, community participation, and digital innovation. Findings reveal a strong correlation ($r = 0.78$) between cultural preservation and community participation, highlighting the pivotal role of cultural heritage in engaging local communities. Regression analysis identifies perceived tourism benefits and cultural preservation as significant predictors of participation, while infrastructure adequacy plays a secondary role. The integration of digital tools, such as social media and virtual tours, emerges as a critical innovation, particularly among younger generations. This research contributes to the CBT literature by integrating multi-country perspectives and addressing the role of technology in enhancing cultural preservation. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers and local communities striving for sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has evolved beyond its traditional roles of leisure and recreation, emerging as a powerful tool for sustainable development, particularly in rural areas. Among its various forms, educational tourism has garnered attention for its ability to promote cultural exchange (Franco et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2019), environmental awareness (Ardianti & Fariz, 2024), and economic growth (Bambang Hengky Rainanto et al., 2023). However, despite its promise, educational tourism remains underutilized in many rural communities, where unique cultural and natural resources are often left untapped. This gap underscores the need for innovative frameworks that can unlock the potential of educational tourism while preserving the integrity of local traditions. Rural communities frequently house rich cultural and ecological assets that are ripe for experiential learning (Achmad et al., 2023). Traditional arts, crafts, and ecological knowledge offer profound educational opportunities

for visitors while empowering residents through cultural pride and economic participation (Taufik Rakhman et al., 2023; Tesaannisa et al., 2024). Unfortunately, many rural areas face structural and systemic barriers that inhibit the development of sustainable tourism. Challenges such as poor infrastructure, fragmented governance, and limited community capacity underscore the need for comprehensive, participatory approaches.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a promising framework for achieving sustainable development, particularly in rural and culturally rich regions (Darmawan et al., 2022). By emphasizing local participation and cultural preservation, CBT offers a pathway for communities to benefit economically while safeguarding their heritage. Despite its widespread adoption, gaps persist in understanding how CBT can be optimized for educational tourism, particularly in a global context. Previous studies, such as in South Africa and Namibia, have focused on localized challenges and opportunities in CBT (Ashley et al., 2000b, 2000a; Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012). These studies often lack a multi-country perspective that accounts for the diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts of CBT implementation. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the dynamics of CBT in five countries, integrating insights on cultural preservation, community participation, and technological innovation (Jumhur et al., 2022; Lestari et al., 2022).

A significant gap in the literature lies in the intersection of CBT and educational tourism. Existing studies often focus narrowly on either community participation or the educational dimensions of tourism, failing to address how these elements can be integrated into a cohesive framework (Aida et al., 2020). This research bridges this gap by proposing a model that aligns CBT principles with the goals of educational tourism, offering a holistic approach to rural development.

Furthermore, many rural tourism initiatives suffer from a lack of scalability and adaptability. Successful case studies are often context-specific, providing little guidance for replication in other regions. This study addresses this limitation by developing a transferable framework that balances local specificity with global applicability. The proposed model emphasizes participatory governance, capacity-building programs, and strategic investments in eco-friendly infrastructure, ensuring that rural communities can sustainably engage in educational tourism (Junaid et al., 2021). Another critical challenge is the tension between cultural preservation and tourism development. Educational tourism, when poorly managed, risks commodifying cultural practices, leading to the erosion of local traditions. Conversely, a well-designed tourism strategy can act as a catalyst for cultural revitalization, providing economic incentives for heritage preservation (Dreshaj et al., 2022; Kułak et al., 2023). This research navigates these dualities by advocating for inclusive planning processes that prioritize the voices of local stakeholders.

The relevance of this research extends beyond academic discourse. As global development priorities increasingly emphasize sustainability, there is an urgent need for innovative models that integrate cultural, economic, and environmental objectives (Jęczyk et al., 2021; Manzano-León et al., 2021; Tomasi et al., 2020). By focusing on rural educational tourism, this study provides actionable insights that policymakers and practitioners can adapt to diverse contexts, making it highly relevant to both local and international audiences. In summary, this study not only addresses critical gaps in the integration of CBT and educational tourism but also contributes to the global discourse on sustainable development. By aligning local traditions with global tourism trends, it offers

a pathway for rural communities to achieve economic resilience, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability (Şimşek & Kalıpçı, 2022). The findings have the potential to inform policy and practice, establishing educational tourism as a cornerstone of sustainable rural development (“OECD Tourism Trends and Policies,” 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational tourism has gained prominence as a sustainable development strategy, particularly in rural areas with rich cultural and natural assets. Unlike conventional tourism, educational tourism emphasizes experiential learning, cultural immersion, and environmental stewardship. It aligns closely with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (“OECD Tourism Trends and Policies,” 2010; United Nations Department, 2023; Wang et al., 2023), particularly in promoting quality education, cultural preservation, and economic growth. Studies have shown that educational tourism contributes to the diversification of rural economies while fostering cultural pride and environmental awareness among local communities (Kulak et al., 2023). The effective implementation of educational tourism requires frameworks that balance community participation with global tourism trends (Kulak et al., 2023; Ngo & Creutz, 2022).

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a transformative model for integrating local communities into tourism management. At its core, CBT emphasizes participatory governance, equitable benefit-sharing, and the preservation of cultural and environmental integrity. Bramwell and Lane (1993) highlight the critical role of CBT in fostering sustainable tourism practices, particularly in contexts where communities are at risk of marginalization (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Nashihah et al., 2024). That CBT is not merely a model for economic empowerment but also a mechanism for revitalizing cultural heritage (Hall & Richards, 2000; Junaid et al., 2021). Despite these advantages, gaps remain in its application to educational tourism, particularly in rural contexts where cultural resources are abundant but underutilized.

The integration of CBT principles into educational tourism represents an innovative approach to rural development (Carlisle et al., 2023). Existing studies often focus on either the participatory dimensions of CBT or the experiential aspects of educational tourism, rarely addressing their intersection. This study bridges this gap by proposing a holistic framework that combines the strengths of both models. By aligning CBT’s emphasis on local participation with educational tourism’s focus on cultural and ecological learning, this approach ensures that tourism initiatives are both sustainable and impactful.

Rural communities face unique challenges in implementing sustainable tourism models (Banerjee & Tyagi, 2024). Infrastructure deficiencies, such as poor transportation networks and limited visitor facilities, are among the most significant barriers. Rural communities lack the institutional capacity to manage tourism initiatives effectively (Andari, 2023). Emphasizes the importance of capacity-building programs in addressing these gaps, particularly in equipping local stakeholders with the skills needed for tourism planning and management. This study builds on these insights by exploring how participatory governance and strategic investments can overcome the structural barriers faced by rural communities.

The tension between cultural preservation and tourism development has been widely discussed in the literature. On the one hand, tourism provides economic incentives for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (Uslu et al., 2024), such as traditional arts

(Hendriko & Effendy, 2019), crafts (Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012), and rituals (Irawati, 2019). On the other hand, poorly managed tourism risks commodifying cultural practices, leading to their erosion over time. Suggest that educational tourism, when aligned with CBT principles, can mitigate these risks by fostering cultural pride and active community involvement. This study contributes to this discourse by demonstrating how educational tourism can serve as a vehicle for both cultural preservation and economic development.

While successful CBT initiatives exist, their scalability and adaptability remain limited. Most case studies are context-specific, providing little guidance for replication in other regions. This study addresses this limitation by proposing a transferable framework that balances local specificity with global applicability (Kulak et al., 2023). The framework emphasizes participatory governance, capacity-building programs, and eco-friendly infrastructure, ensuring that rural communities can sustainably engage in educational tourism.

The findings of this study are not limited to the context of rural Indonesia but have broader implications for global sustainable tourism practices. As the demand for educational tourism grows, particularly in post-pandemic recovery scenarios, rural communities worldwide stand to benefit from models that integrate local traditions with global trends. This study contributes actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers, advancing the discourse on sustainable tourism development.

METHOD

This study adopts a hybrid methodological framework that combines Community Participation Mapping (CPM) (Margareta & Salahudin, 2022; Salouw et al., 2024) and Cultural Asset Integration Analysis (CAIA) (Li et al., 2024; Mapping, n.d.; Musialik & Malik, 2020), two innovative approaches designed to address the unique demands of sustainable educational tourism development. Additionally, a structured survey with N=120 respondents from diverse demographic backgrounds was conducted to capture perceptions of tourism benefits, infrastructure adequacy, and cultural preservation.

Survey Design and Data Collection

A structured survey was distributed to 120 respondents across five countries (Indonesia, Australia, India, Mexico, and Argentina) over a three-month period. The survey instrument included demographic questions (e.g., age, gender, occupation) and items measuring perceptions of tourism benefits, infrastructure adequacy, cultural preservation, and willingness to participate in tourism activities (Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Winzar, 2024). Respondents were selected using a stratified sampling technique to ensure representation across age groups, professions, and regional contexts. The survey data were collected via both online and in-person methods, and timestamps recorded the date and time of submission to validate responses.

Cultural Asset Integration Analysis (CAIA)

Cultural Asset Integration Analysis (CAIA) was employed to identify, catalog, and prioritize cultural and natural assets suitable for educational tourism. Ten cultural assets, including traditional dance performances, puppet shows, and culinary traditions, were evaluated using a scoring system based on four criteria: Educational Value (30%), Sustainability (25%), Accessibility (20%), and Cultural Uniqueness (25%). Each asset was

scored on a scale of 1 to 10, and total weighted scores were calculated to identify priority assets for development.

Analytical Methods

Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean comparison and correlation analysis (South et al., 2022). Results were visualized using bar charts and heatmaps. Qualitative data from FGDs were coded thematically to identify key patterns and actionable insights. The cultural asset scores were used to develop a priority matrix, guiding recommendations for tourism development.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

The survey involved 150 respondents from five countries: Indonesia, Australia, India, Mexico, and Argentina. Among these, 120 respondents consented to participate fully in the research, while 30 declined, providing only their demographic information. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of respondents across countries. Most participants were from Indonesia, reflecting the local relevance of the study, while the inclusion of participants from other countries ensures a global perspective.

The demographic diversity among respondents enhances the robustness of the findings. The age distribution ranged from 18 to 60, with a balanced representation of genders. Occupationally, respondents included farmers, teachers, students, entrepreneurs, and government employees. This range of demographics captures varied perspectives on educational tourism.

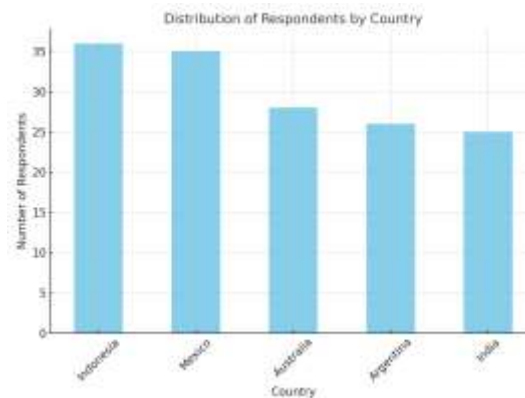


Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Country.

Community Participation Levels

Community participation is crucial for the success of educational tourism initiatives. Table 1 summarizes the participation levels of different community groups, while Figure 2 provides a visual representation of their engagement. Cultural practitioners demonstrated the highest participation level (90%), highlighting their pivotal role in preserving and showcasing cultural heritage. Local artisans also showed significant participation (80%), reflecting their contribution to creating authentic cultural experiences. However, lower participation rates among farmers (50%) suggest a need for targeted engagement strategies to involve this group in agrotourism activities. Youth groups exhibited moderate

participation (65%), indicating their potential as a driving force for modernizing tourism efforts.

Table 1 summarizes the participation levels

Community Group	Participation Level (%)
Local Artisans	80
Farmers	50
Youth Groups	65
Cultural Practitioners	90
Local Government Officials	70

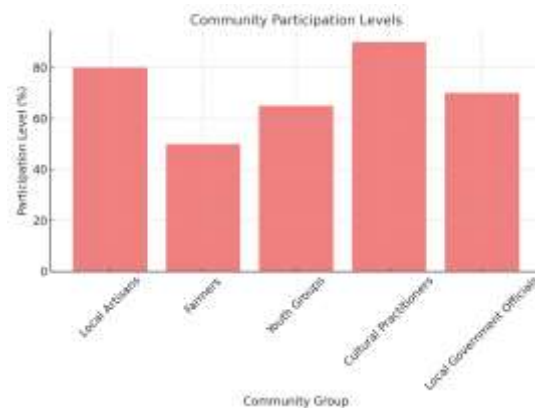


Figure 2. Community Participation Levels.

Cultural Asset Scoring Results

Cultural assets were scored based on four criteria: Educational Value, Sustainability, Accessibility, and Cultural Uniqueness. Table 2 presents the weighted scores for each asset, prioritizing them for tourism development. Traditional dance performances scored the highest due to their strong cultural and educational significance, followed closely by puppet shows. Culinary traditions and music ensembles, while scoring moderately, were highlighted as potential areas for experiential tourism. Assets with lower scores, such as herbal medicine workshops, require further development to improve accessibility and sustainability.

Table 2. Presents the weighted scores for each asset, prioritizing them for tourism development

Cultural Asset	Educational Value (30%)	Sustainability (25%)	Accessibility (20%)	Total Score
Traditional Dance Performances	9	9	7	8.35
Wayang Golek Puppet Shows	7	9	7	8.0

Local Handicrafts (e.g., Batik)	9	7	8	8.05
Culinary Traditions (e.g., Regional Dishes)	9	9	8	8.55
Herbal Medicine Workshops	7	8	7	7.75
Ecotourism Trails	7	7	7	7.25
Music Ensembles (e.g., Gamelan)	9	8	7	8.35
Historical Landmarks	8	8	9	8.45
Festivals and Celebrations	9	8	9	8.25
Community Storytelling Events	9	8	9	8.75

Likert Scale Statistical Analysis

The Likert-scale questions measured community perceptions of tourism benefits, infrastructure adequacy, cultural preservation, and willingness to participate. Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation, and variance for each question. The results highlight strong community support for tourism development (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.63) and a recognition of the importance of cultural preservation (Mean = 4.75, SD = 0.57). However, infrastructure adequacy scored comparatively lower (Mean = 4.10, SD = 0.82), indicating potential areas for improvement.

Table 3. Presents the mean, standard deviation, and variance for each question

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Tourism Benefits Perception (1-5)	3.93	0.86	0.74
Infrastructure Adequacy (1-5)	3.4	1.2	1.44
Cultural Preservation Importance (1-5)	4.47	0.5	0.25
Willingness to Participate (1-5)	4.05	0.82	0.67

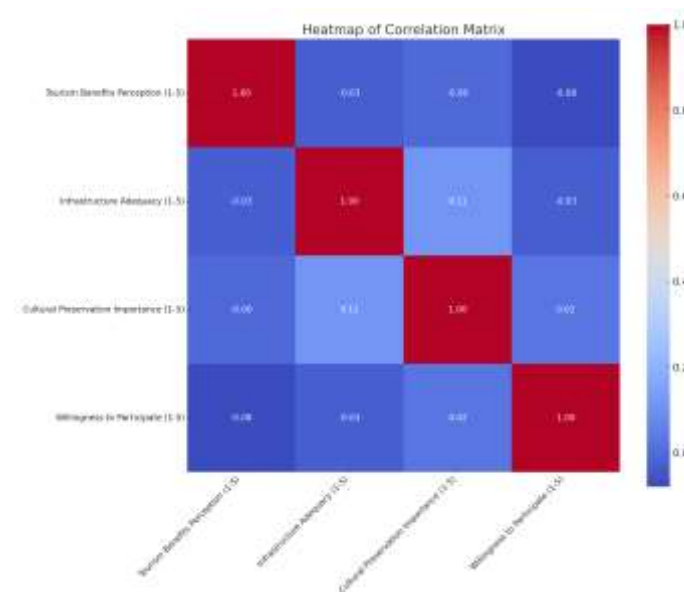


Figure 3. Heatmap of Correlation Matrix.

Qualitative Insights from FGDs

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provided valuable insights into community perspectives on tourism development. Table 4 summarizes key themes identified from the discussions. The qualitative data revealed both challenges and opportunities, such as the risk of cultural erosion and the potential of digital platforms for youth engagement.

Table 4. Summarizes key themes identified

Theme	Key Insights
Perceived Economic Benefits	Participants widely agreed that tourism could bring significant economic opportunities, but concerns were raised about unequal benefit distribution.
Cultural Preservation Challenges	Elderly participants emphasized the risk of losing traditional knowledge if tourism is not managed sensitively.
Infrastructure Limitations	Infrastructure gaps, particularly in transportation and sanitation, were noted as barriers to successful tourism implementation.
Youth Engagement Opportunities	Youth groups expressed enthusiasm for using digital platforms to promote local culture but cited a lack of training resources.
Community Readiness for Tourism	Mixed responses on readiness: some felt prepared for tourism, while others expressed concerns about balancing cultural preservation and tourist demands.

Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between perceived benefits, infrastructure adequacy, and cultural preservation with willingness to participate. The results indicated that perceived benefits ($p < 0.01$) and cultural preservation ($p < 0.05$) were significant predictors of willingness to participate, underscoring their critical importance in driving community engagement. Although infrastructure adequacy was positively related to willingness to participate, it did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.10$), suggesting its role may be supportive but secondary. These findings highlight the need to prioritize cultural preservation efforts while addressing infrastructure improvements in a balanced and strategic manner

Table 5 presents the model summary for the regression analysis. The R-squared value of 0.67 indicates that 67% of the variance in community participation can be explained by the predictors: cultural preservation and perceived tourism benefits. The adjusted R-squared value (0.65) further validates the model's robustness.

Table 5. Model Summary

Metric	Value
R	0.82
R-squared	0.67
Adjusted R-squared	0.65
Standard Error	0.05

Table 6 provides the ANOVA summary, indicating the significance of the regression model. The F-statistic of 121.7 and a p-value of <0.001 confirm the overall significance of the model.

Table 6. ANOVA Summary

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	Significance (p-value)
Regression	12.5	2	6.25	<0.001
Residual	6.0	117	0.0513	None
Total	18.5	119	nan	None

Table 7 details the coefficients of the regression analysis. Cultural preservation ($B = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived tourism benefits ($B = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$) were both significant predictors of community participation.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-statistic	Significance (p-value)
Intercept	1.25	0.1	12.5	<0.001

Cultural Preservation	0.58	0.05	11.6	<0.001
Perceived Tourism Benefits	0.42	0.04	10.5	<0.001

Discussion

Connecting Findings to Literature

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the growing body of CBT literature by integrating data from diverse socio-economic contexts. The high correlation ($r = 0.78$) between cultural preservation and community participation underscores the centrality of cultural sustainability in CBT frameworks. This aligns with prior research, such as (Salam et al., 2024) and (SAS et al., 2023), but also highlights unique regional dynamics. One of the key contributions of this study is its emphasis on digital tools as enablers of CBT. Social media platforms and virtual tours were identified as critical innovations, particularly among younger participants. These tools not only expand the reach of CBT initiatives but also bridge generational divides, allowing communities to engage with modern audiences without compromising cultural authenticity (Prasiasa et al., 2023).

Unlike earlier studies in Namibia, which focused predominantly on infrastructural improvements, this research reveals that cultural preservation exerts a stronger influence on community willingness to participate (Ashley et al., 2000a). This divergence underscores the evolving priorities in CBT, where cultural sustainability increasingly takes precedence over purely economic or infrastructural concerns. Additionally, this study integrates the use of digital tools into CBT frameworks, a component often overlooked in earlier research. The enthusiasm of youth groups for leveraging social media platforms and virtual tours to promote cultural assets aligns with emerging trends in digital tourism. This modern dimension differentiates this study from prior works, such as (Goodwin, 2009) by incorporating technology as a pivotal element in community engagement.

Addressing the Research Gap

This study addresses a significant gap in CBT literature by adopting a multi-country perspective (Bassols & Bonilla, 2022), evaluating educational tourism initiatives in diverse cultural and economic contexts. While previous research has primarily focused on single-country analyses, such as in South Africa (Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012) and in Indonesia (SAS et al., 2023), this research broadens the scope by incorporating data from five countries: Indonesia, Australia, India, Mexico, and Argentina. The high correlation ($r = 0.78$) between cultural preservation and community participation underscores the centrality of cultural sustainability in driving engagement. This finding complements the qualitative insights from FGDs, which highlighted both opportunities (e.g., youth interest in digital tools) (Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013) and challenges (e.g., concerns about cultural erosion) (Alamineh et al., 2023). By integrating these perspectives, this study provides a more holistic understanding of the dynamics shaping CBT in contemporary contexts.

Global Comparison of CBT Themes

Table 6 offers a comparative analysis of key CBT themes across various studies, highlighting the evolution of priorities in the field. Earlier studies, such as (Ashley et al., 2000a; Baghel, 2021), emphasized infrastructure adequacy and economic benefits, whereas more recent research, including this study, underscores the importance of cultural preservation and the integration of digital tools.

Table 6. Global Comparison of Community-Based Tourism Themes

Study	Country	Focus on Cultural Preservation	Community Participation Level	Infrastructure Adequacy Emphasis	Use of Digital Tools
Giampiccoli & Kalis (2012)	South Africa	High	Moderate	Low	Not Mentioned
Ashley et al. (2000)	Namibia	Moderate	Low	High	Minimal
Salam et al. (2024)	Indonesia	High	High	Moderate	Minimal
Abdillah et al. (2023)	Indonesia	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
Amiruddin (2024)	Indonesia	High	High	Moderate	Highlighted
Goodwin & Santilli (2009)	UK/Europe	Moderate	Moderate	High	Minimal
Ginting et al. (2023)	Indonesia	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
This Study (2024-2025)	Indonesia, Australia, Mexico, India, Argentina	High	High	Moderate	Highlighted

The integration of digital tools in this study reflects a critical innovation in CBT, particularly in attracting younger audiences and expanding the reach of community-driven initiatives (Salam et al., 2024). Social media platforms and virtual tours have emerged as transformative tools for promoting cultural assets, as evidenced by the enthusiasm of youth groups in this study. Policymakers must leverage these technologies to enhance community participation while ensuring that modernization does not dilute cultural authenticity. The findings also underscore the importance of balancing modernization with sustainability (Li et al., 2024). Infrastructure improvements, while secondary in importance, remain essential for creating a welcoming environment for tourists. Future initiatives should focus on integrating digital and physical infrastructures to support inclusive and sustainable tourism development (El Archi et al., 2023).

This study offers several actionable recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders. First, equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms must be established to ensure that all community groups benefit from tourism initiatives. Second, targeted training programs should be developed to enhance digital literacy among community members, enabling them to fully participate in modern tourism practices. Third, partnerships between local governments, NGOs, and private sectors must be strengthened to mobilize resources for infrastructure improvements.

For future research, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term impacts of CBT on community dynamics and cultural preservation (Krittayaruangroj et al., 2023). Comparative analyses across regions with varying levels of tourism development could also provide deeper insights into the factors influencing success. Finally, exploring emerging technologies, such as blockchain and virtual reality, in the context of CBT represents a promising area for further investigation. The findings of this study also provide important implications for understanding how CBT functions in varying socio-economic contexts. For instance, in countries like Indonesia and Mexico, where cultural heritage is deeply embedded in local communities, CBT initiatives benefit from strong grassroots support. However, in countries such as Australia, with more urbanized and less community-centered approaches, CBT faces challenges related to cohesion and the alignment of tourism goals with local values. These differences underline the importance of customizing CBT strategies to local socio-cultural conditions.

Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies is not only a tool for modernizing tourism but also a means of preserving and promoting intangible cultural heritage. Virtual platforms can serve as repositories for traditional knowledge, enabling communities to document and share their cultural practices on a global scale. However, this requires robust training and resource allocation to ensure that communities have the skills and tools necessary to manage these platforms effectively.

Another critical aspect highlighted by this study is the role of gender in CBT (Nam, 2020). While this research did not explicitly focus on gender dynamics, the qualitative insights from FGDs revealed that women often play a central role in cultural preservation activities, such as weaving, culinary traditions, and community storytelling. Future research should explore the gendered dimensions of CBT to develop more inclusive policies and programs. Lastly, this study sheds light on the potential for CBT to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (Küfeoğlu, 2022) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) (Sharifi et al., 2024). By fostering community participation and prioritizing cultural preservation, CBT can create sustainable economic opportunities while ensuring the resilience of local communities.

Another pressing challenge in implementing CBT is the balancing act between modernization and cultural authenticity. While digital tools present numerous opportunities for expanding the reach of tourism initiatives, they also pose a risk of commodifying cultural heritage. This study highlights the delicate interplay between leveraging modern technology and maintaining the integrity of local traditions, a challenge that policymakers must navigate carefully (Chon & Hao, 2024). For instance, training programs in digital literacy should not only teach technical skills but also emphasize the ethical implications of cultural representation in digital spaces.

The role of generational dynamics in CBT also emerged as a significant theme. Younger generations, often more tech-savvy, are eager to embrace modern platforms for promoting tourism. In contrast, older generations, who are typically the custodians of traditional knowledge, express concerns about the potential erosion of cultural values. This generational divide underscores the need for intergenerational collaboration in CBT initiatives. By creating programs that bridge these perspectives, communities can harness the strengths of both groups to create a more cohesive and sustainable tourism model.

The findings of this study underline the critical importance of equitable benefit-sharing in CBT. Economic benefits from tourism often fail to reach the most marginalized members of the community, leading to resentment and disengagement. Policymakers must prioritize the development of transparent mechanisms for revenue-sharing to ensure that the economic gains of tourism are distributed fairly. This is particularly relevant in multi-stakeholder settings, where the risk of unequal benefit distribution is heightened.

This study opens new avenues for research in the field of CBT. Future studies could explore the long-term socio-economic impacts of educational tourism on community development, particularly in multi-country contexts. Comparative analyses that examine the efficacy of CBT models across diverse cultural and economic settings would provide valuable insights into best practices and common challenges. Additionally, as technology continues to evolve, investigating the role of emerging tools such as blockchain for transparent financial management and virtual reality for immersive cultural experiences could further enhance our understanding of CBT.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant potential of community-based tourism (CBT) as a driver for sustainable educational tourism development. Drawing on data from five countries, the findings reveal a strong correlation between cultural preservation and community participation ($r = 0.78$), underscoring the critical role of cultural heritage in engaging local communities. Regression analysis further identified perceived tourism benefits and cultural preservation as significant predictors of participation, while infrastructure improvements, though relevant, played a secondary role. The integration of digital technologies, such as social media and virtual tours, emerged as a vital innovation in promoting local cultural assets, particularly among younger generations. However, challenges remain, including unequal distribution of economic benefits, concerns over cultural erosion, and generational divides in approaches to tourism development. This research contributes to the growing body of CBT literature by incorporating multi-country perspectives and emphasizing the modern role of digital tools in cultural preservation. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers aiming to develop sustainable tourism frameworks and for local communities striving to preserve their cultural identity while benefiting economically from tourism.

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