

## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

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**Abstract:** Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a tool to ensure sustainable development in many countries by enhancing natural resource conservation, preserving culture and traditions as well as generating income at local level. Bangladesh is one of the third world countries having scarcity of finance but they can increase their GDP through giving stress to tourism industry (Muhammad shamsuduha, 2005). Sreemangal is a naturally blessed place in Bangladesh which is enriched by its natural resources as well as local community's rich unique cultures, traditions, history, living style and hospitality. This study is carried out to identify how Community-Based Tourism helps to promote the economic sustainability of rural economy in Sreemangal. Both primary and secondary data are collected and then primary data (collected from study area by using questionnaire survey) are analyzed by using SPSS software. After analyzing the data, it could be sum up that Community Based Tourism will help to ensure economic solvency of local community by creating employment opportunities for locals, to confirm the greater profit distribution among all stakeholders, to create new local markets for community's unique tourism products, indirectly contribute in poverty reduction as well as educational rate and living standard enhancement. This study also dowries some recommendations based on the findings of the analysis.

**Keywords:** Community Based Tourism, sustainability, rural economic sustainability, poverty alleviation

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### Introduction

Tourism is one of the most effective tools in enhancing the regional development, community empowerment and poverty alleviation (Pantiyasa, 2013). Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a bottom up approach for enhancing the sustainable development in many developing countries. It also aids in the conservation of natural resources, preservation of traditional cultures and income generation at local/rural level. It aims to create sustainable tourism industry focusing on rural/host community. CBT contributes to local community's wellbeing by developing local infrastructures (transportation, water, electricity and telecommunication networks) and superstructures (legal and institutional structure of health, safety, security, civil rights, environmental, heritage and cultural preservation). Community participation in tourism will share extra benefits with all stakeholders. CBT expands and improves the success of livelihood and opportunities by creating employment for locals which indirectly helps locals in creating market place for community's products, creating educational opportunities, ensuring social improvements, living standards and others economic aspects.

### Literature Review

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is a sustainable tourism that is run and managed by community that is being visited by tourists. Because local people are the decision makers for the tourist destinations, profits go directly to the community (Khanal & Babar 2007). More emphasis is given on improving the outcomes for host communities through tourism development. It also defines as stakeholder theory and suggests establishing communication and partnership among stakeholders (Dodds, 2007; Simpson, 2008). According to Rubin and Rubin (1992:6), "Community Development involves local empowerment through organized groups of people acting collectively to control decisions, projects, program and policies that affect them as community. Community Based Tourism emphasizes the central role of local communities in tourism and has a larger correlation with community development than other forms of tourism. Well-managed CBT has the potential to address all three aspects of sustainability: economy, society and environment (APEC Tourism Working Group and STCRC, 2010).

## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

Sustainable tourism development implies the need to secure the sustainability of tourism's primary resources at the destination level, and is a way of obtaining a balance between the growth potentials of tourism and the conservation needs of the resources. Sustainable tourism strategies have several aims such as to meet the needs and wants of the local host community in terms of improved living standards and quality of life (Theobald: 2005). The idea of sustainable development has been applied to a social or community sustainability to be pursued through responsible policies (Ashworth, 2003).

Community development is at the heart of CBT. Most CBT projects are small scale and they often include community owned and operated lodges and other facilities. This would provide positive economic benefits, such as income, for large parts of the community.

Its proponents advocate maximizing the benefits of tourism to local people and achieving community development objectives through building community capacity and empowerment (Rocharungsat, 2008). The empowerment of local communities in controlling their resources and tourism activities will help them to develop their knowledge and management skills to cope with this new community business (Anucha Leksakundilok, 2004a: 35). Community Based Tourism can not only help local villagers control the negative impacts of tourism, but also generate additional incomes and diversify the local economy (Tuffin, 2005: 178). Community participation must give a sense of ownership and responsibility for tourism to the community as a means of ensuring the retention of economic benefits and minimizing of negative socio-cultural impact (Ying & Zhou, 2007). Community Based Tourism has become an effective tool for supplementing their incomes from fishing and conserving nature at the same time (White and Rosales, 2003: 248).

UN World Tourism Organization (Bao2008) defined CBT 'as a promising alternative to conventional approaches to development, a participatory, holistic and inclusive process that can lead to positive, concrete changes in communities by creating employment, reducing poverty, restoring the health of natural environment, stabilizing local economies, and increasing community control'. The idea of CBT is therefore to foster sustainable development with local empowerment, considering the three dimensions of sustainability: social, environmental and economic.

The CBT initiatives aim to involve local residents in the running and management of small tourism projects as a means of alleviating poverty and providing an alternative income source for community members" (Netherlands Development Organization (SNV)).

### Objectives of the Study

Major objective of this study is to identify how community Based Tourism promotes economic sustainability of rural community. Other secondary objectives are:

- To examine the necessity of Community Based Tourism as means to promote sustainable tourism.
- To identify the role of Community Based Tourism in poverty alleviation among rural community.

### Methodology

Research is conducted through both qualitative and quantitative research approach. Primary and secondary data sources are used for data collection. Primary data are collected by questionnaire survey and qualitative data are collected by using secondary sources. Convenience and judgmental sampling techniques were used for the sample selection of this study. A convenience sample is one of the main types of non-probability sampling methods. A convenience sample is made up of people who are easy to reach during the survey period. The total sample size was 100. And the total respondents were divided into four categories- Community people, tourists, stakeholders and experts. Questionnaire survey method is used to collect data from selective respondents. Questionnaire is designed in both open-ended and close-ended; respondent's demographic data are collected by the first section of questionnaire and second section enclosed with question related to the topic. A five point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree) was used in this questionnaire preparation to collect the necessary data. The Likert scale was used in this section as it is one of the most effective and popular scales for collecting perception and attitudinal data through direct approach (McLeod, 2008; Bortholomew, 2006).

Here, regression analysis was used for analyzing the relationships among the dependent and independent variables. Also correlations among variables are tested through correlation analysis and the following hypothesis is tested through hypothesis testing.

### Hypothesis of the study:

H0: There is no significant relationship exists between Community Based Tourism and economic sustainability.

H1: There is significant relationship between Community Based tourism and economic sustainability.

## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

### Study Area: Sreemangal

Sreemangal is under the Sylhet division since the year 1996. It is close to Bangladesh-India boarder. It is nearly 160Km northeast of Dhaka, approximately 60Km south of Sylhet city. It takes three and half hours by road (popular transportation providers-Shohag, Saudia, Hanif express, Shamoli) and four and half hours by train (Udayan Express is more popular) to reach Sreemangal.

Sreemangal is the place of tea gardens, hills and forest area on the hills. It is famous for the largest tea gardens of the world covered by lush green carpet. One can enjoy the tea garden (enjoy the nice smell and green beauty of tea garden situated in the mountain) as well as the whole process how tea is being processed at Tea Research Institute. Most of the tea estates of Sylhet are situated in Sreemangal. It is also known as the tea capital of Bangladesh.

### Tourist places at Sreemangal:

- Tea Garden
- Lawacherra Rain Forest
- Madhobpur Lake
- Tribal community's Culture and Tradition

Sreemangal has 47 tea estates and this tea leaves are supplied across the whole country as well as 26 foreign countries. Most renowned tea companies have their plant at Sreemangal like Finlays, Ispahani and other well established brands. Unique features of that tea garden are that those tea gardens are surrounded by the hilly areas. One visitor can enjoy tea garden as well as hilly flavor from the same place here.

Madhobpur Lake, another renowned tourist place in Sreemangal is surrounded by hilly areas and tea garden. National Tea Company's (NTC) tea producing factory is also located near by the lake. Lawachara national park, another tourist spots is well – reserved forest in Bangladesh This place is perfect for tracking and nature-lover people. A reserved government rest room is available but this is only available to prior permission. Visitors can enjoy more than 155 species of birds, habitant of Deer, wild chicken and python.

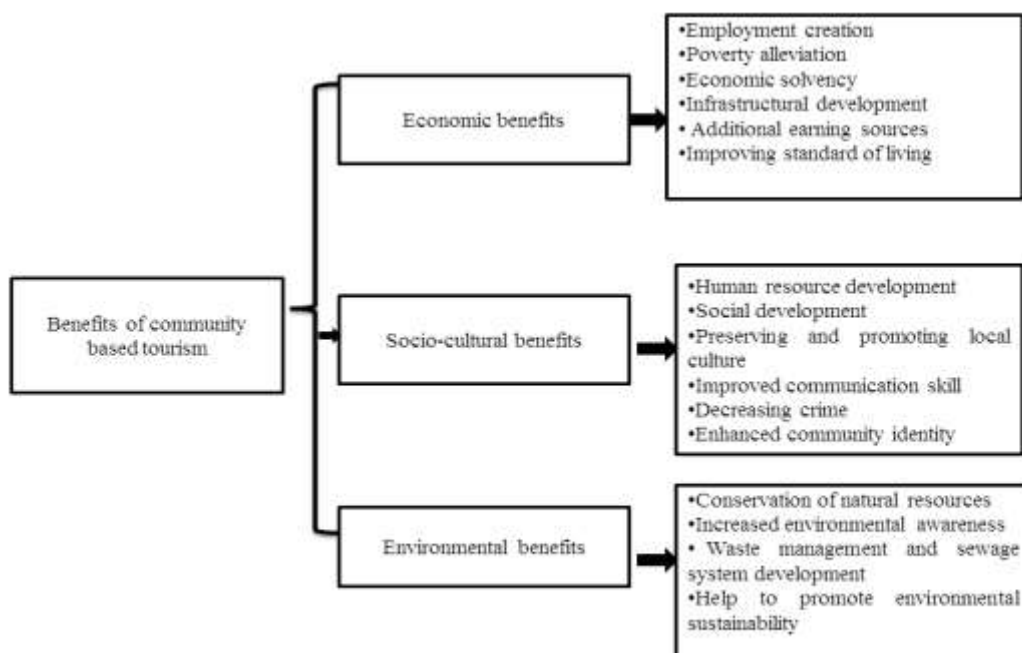
Sreemangal is famous for Khasia and Manipuri ethnic-community. Bisnupriya Manipuri people are the second largest ethnic group in Sylhet Division. They migrated to Bangladesh during the reign of Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (1764-1789). At present they live in different places of Sylhet Division, like Kamalganj, Sreemongal, Kulaura and Baralekha thanas of Moulvi Bazar district; Chunarughat thana of Habiganj district and Chhatak thana of Sunamganj district. According to the 1991 population census, there were about 25,000 Manipuris in Bangladesh. Their classical Manipuri dance tradition is a key part of Bangladesh's national culture. They celebrate seed planting and crop harvesting in their own colourful way. Manipuri culture has a rich and colorful tradition where dance and music play a vital role. The most vibrant branch of Manipuri culture is dance. Rasa dance is the finest product of their culture. Manipuri dance is characterized by gentleness, tenderness and devotion. The dress they wear during a dance is really gorgeous and beautiful. A very popular festival of the Manipuris is a type of Gopi dance celebrating the romantic liaison of Radha and Krishna. In the spring, Manipuris celebrate Holi, when they drench each other with colour. Most religious rites and festivals of the Manipuris are based on the seasons of the year.

Khusia tribe is famous for their betel leaf cultivation. Betel leaf is also known as "Zum Cultivation". Their houses look like a piece of paradise because they build their houses at the peak of hills. They also have enriched cultural resources like Manipuri community.

### Community Based Tourism and Economic Sustainability

Tourism is typically regarded as an effective tool for enhancing the economic growth particularly for developing counties. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) alleviates poverty as well as ensures equitable economic benefits distribution among the locals rather than outsider. Community Based Tourism is considered as a tool to strengthen the rural community's ability for managing tourism resources by generating income, diversifying the local economy, preserving the local culture, conserving the environment and providing educational opportunities (APEC,2009). CBT will aid to confirm fair distribution of economic benefits as well as power distribution among whole community. Proper planning (maintaining carrying capacity of each destination) and careful collaboration among stakeholders will maintain the sustainability of natural resources.

Figure-1: Benefits of Community Based Tourism



Source: Author, 2017

CBT contributes to ensure balanced development: providing economic diversity, eliminating economic dependency on a few sectors, improving geographic distribution of employment and income generation opportunities and increased flow of resources towards local level development initiatives. CBT has provided a variety of tourism-related jobs for the villagers to earn extra income in addition to their main sources. But for ensuring the success of Community Based Tourism (CBT), influential factors must be considered and proper products must be offered to tourists. In this regard Community Based Tourism (CBT) might be a most effective framework not only for sharing economic benefits with locals but also for contributing to the social well-being of locals. CBT has that much potential which enhance the social sustainability of rural community by empowering them to manage the resources.

**Analysis and Findings**

Data analysis helps to examine and evaluate the collected data properly. Here data collected from primary sources are analyzed to understand the role of community based tourism (CBT) as a tool to promote economic sustainability of rural community of Sreemangal region.

**Table 1: Respondents socio-demographic profile**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	63	63.0
Female	37	37.0
Total	100	100.0
<b>Age segment:</b>		
Up to 20 years	12	12.0
21-30 years	35	35.0
31-40 years	40	40.0
41-50 years	8	8.0
Above 50 years	5	5.0
Total	100	100.0
<b>Marital status:</b>		
Married	54	54.0
Single	46	46.0

## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

Profession:		
Agriculture	1	1.0
Business	16	16.0
Service holder	42	42.0
Student	32	32.0
Others	9	9.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: SPSS output of primary data

The above table provides the respondents' information. Out of total 100 respondent 63(63%) were male and 37 (37%) were female. Data were collected from different age group. Large group of respondent were from 31 to 40 (40%) age group people. In addition, 42 (42%) were service holder and 54(54%) respondents were married and 46(46%) were unmarried respondent.

**Table 2: Reliability statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
0.687	14

Source: SPSS output of primary data

Above table shows that the value of alpha is 0.687 (68.7%) this is above 50%, so it can be said that the data are reliable.

### Regression Analysis

The purpose of this mechanism is to measure the relative influence of each independent variable on dependent variable. The following model is developing to test the significance of stated relationship. The regression used this model is given below:

**Table 3: Model summary**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F change	Df1	Df2	Sig. F change
1	.502	.252	.138	.570	.252	2.224	13	86	.015

Source: SPSS output of primary data

Here, table shows that there belongs moderate level of correlation between the dependent and independent variables of the study. Here, value of R is .502 which indicates these moderate level relationships. And R square is .252. Here, sig. F changes (.015) which is less than .050. It indicates it is significant at 95% that is satisfactory to prove the model is fit.

**Table 4: Anova**

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	9.408	13	.724	2.224	.015
Residual	27.982	86	.325		
Total	37.390	99			

Source: SPSS output of primary data

Here, the table analyzes the variance of variables loaded in the model to examine if there is any relationship exists between dependent and independent variables. The significance level of the F value determines the goodness of fit of the model. Typically if "sig" is less than .050, then the model is fit at 95% significant level.

## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

**Table 5: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.042	.861		2.370	.020
Creates job for the hosts	-.038	.098	-.042	-.392	.696
<b>Economic solvency via employment opportunity creation</b>	<b>.295</b>	<b>.108</b>	<b>.294</b>	<b>2.741</b>	<b>.007</b>
Improve living of standards	-.210	.124	-.188	-1.691	.094
<b>High education rate</b>	<b>.226</b>	<b>.100</b>	<b>.259</b>	<b>2.255</b>	<b>.027</b>
Additional income for young	-.071	.116	-.074	-.614	.541
<b>Greater profit distribution and local market creation</b>	<b>-.194</b>	<b>.095</b>	<b>-.213</b>	<b>-2.047</b>	<b>.044</b>
High price of local products	.064	.107	.070	.600	.550
Additional services	.122	.089	.142	1.365	.176
Supporting for other industries	.118	.104	.121	1.128	.262
<b>Alleviate poverty</b>	<b>.079</b>	<b>.503</b>	<b>.190</b>	<b>2.044</b>	<b>.027</b>
Destroy natural resources	-.016	.110	-.015	-.141	.888
Increase costs of living					
High price of local goods	.015	.090	.020	.164	.870
	.024	.090	.032	.273	.786

**Source:** SPSS output of primary data

Analysis of coefficient provides which independent variables have significant relationship with the dependent variables and provides the importance of each independent variable independently. Here, Beta (B) depicts that every unit change in the independent variable can cause a certain portion impact on the dependent variable. To clarify the coefficient the following regression model is formulated:

$$Y=2.042-.038X1+.295X2-.210X3+.226X4-.071X5-.194X6+.064X7+.122X8+.118X9+.079X10-.016X11+.015X12+.024X13$$

Here, X1= job creation, X2= Economic solvency employment opportunity creation, X3= Improving standards of living, X4= High education rate, X5= Additional income for young, X6= Greater profit distribution and local market creation, X7= Higher price of local products, X8= Additional services, X9= Supporting other business, X10= Alleviate poverty, X11= Destroy natural resources, X12= Increasing cost of living, X13= Higher price of products.

### Testing hypothesis

From the above coefficient table it can be said that independent variables (economic impacts) economic solvency is growing through job opportunity creation for locals (.007), high education rate (.027), greater profit distribution among stakeholders and market creation for local products (0.044), poverty alleviation (0.027) have strong (significant at 0.050 level) relationship with the Community Based Tourism. So, null hypothesis has been rejected.

Based on the above information it can be said that economic sustainability will be ensured through Community Based Tourism. The relationship between economic impacts and Community Based Tourism is positive and if CBT can be established it will help to reduce poverty by creating economic solvency which is the most viable elements for ensuring economic sustainability of the community.

### Recommendations

Community Based Tourism (CBT) development can only be achieved when the community realizes its own potential as a community, fully appreciates its natural and cultural resources, and is empowered to be responsible for keeping its own economic wheel spinning in a sustainable manner. However, following suggestions could help to enjoy the greatest benefits from CBT in Sreemangal.

## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

- Rising of awareness and capacity building on community level are the first issues which predetermine the further success of establishment of a Community Based Tourism (CBT) framework in Sreemangal. Because for the conservation of resources and ensuring economic sustainability of the destination, local people's awareness and participation in tourism and tourism related activities is mandatory.
- Profit should be properly distributed among all stakeholders of Community Based Tourism (CBT) and it will help to motivate people on Community Based Tourism (CBT) and ensure their economic stability.
- Local market needs to be created for selling the indigenous products and services. It will help to maintain the economic sustainability of the community.
- Infrastructure and superstructure of this particular area needs to develop. Without proper infrastructure facilities, it is quite impossible to attract a large number of tourists from long distance as well as foreign tourists. It will also help to ensure safe and quick movement of local products and resources.
- Higher education rate of the community will be increased through achieving economic solvency by participating Community Based Tourism related activities.
- Training and motivational activities needs to be carried out in that area to engage more people with this industry.

### Conclusion

Community-Based-Tourism (CBT) will help to increased local income: revenues and employment, to alleviate, to ensure economic recovery, to improved infrastructure, to maintain the harmony with other existing sustainable economic activities, to develop the linkages among sectors, to create markets for existing products and service. Community Based Tourism (CBT) has a great role in ensuring environmental, cultural and economic sustainability of a community. If the negative impacts can be minimized and awareness among the community as well as tourists can be created, it will help to reduce the negative impacts. And it will also help to make local people more efficient and aware about their own resources and to teach who to preserve the resources. From above discussion, it can be said, Community-Based-Tourism (CBT) is one of the effective media/tool to ensure the overall economic sustainability of any destination.

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## Potentials of Community Based Tourism as a Promoter of Rural Economic Sustainability: Study on Sreemangal

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