



RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: HARNESSING TRADITIONAL FOODS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN MBOZI SONGWE REGION, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper was to harness traditional foods involving local communities in managing and conserving these resources. Community-based tourism (CBT) has emerged as a sustainable development strategy that empowers local communities, preserves cultural heritage, and promotes economic growth. This paper explores the potential of CBT in the Mbozi Songwe region of Tanzania, focusing on the unique aspects of traditional foods and resource management. The study was qualitative, using interviews to collect data. The area of study is Iyula and Mlangali villages in Mbozi district. The villages were selected based on the villagers' interest in emphasizing traditional foods. The population of the study was 3,164 in the two villages. The study design was a case study of the Mlangali and Iyula villages in Mbozi district. The study's sample size was purposive and selected from the two villages' critical persons of the heritage committee, accounting for 30, considering the saturation point for data collection. The study findings found various traditional foods in the Mbozi district: ugali from cereals, traditional meat sourced from trees, traditional roots, and fruits. Most of the traditional foods in Mbozi come from forests, and conservation is essential for the sustainable prevention of nutrition. The paper concludes that there is a need to foster community ownership and participation in forests, and CBT can ensure that tourism activities are aligned with environmental conservation goals and the preservation of cultural heritage. The paper recommends that Training programs, capacity-building initiatives, and collaborative partnerships between local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations are essential for the success of CBT in Tanzania. The paper recommends that policy-makers, tourism practitioners, and local communities develop and promote CBT in the Mbozi Songwe region. By leveraging the region's unique cultural and natural assets, CBT can become a powerful tool for sustainable development, providing economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting environmental conservation.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a significant role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of local communities and the country's development. Visitors are often eager to explore a destination's unique traditions, customs, and historical sites (Ekstorn, 2023). Today, tourism is estimated to contribute nearly 10% to global GDP, considering its direct, indirect, and induced impacts. According to UNWTO, in 2019, there were 1.1 billion international tourist arrivals, up from a mere 25 million in 1950. Tourism is widely seen as a significant economic driver, with a multiplier effect on related businesses such as hospitality and small business. Inbound tourism earnings spill over into other industries, improving the local population's financial well-being and standard of living (Diwas, 2024). The essential economic element of tourism-related activities is that they help developing countries achieve three high-priority goals: revenue production, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. Tourism can be essential to economic growth (UNWTO, 2019).

Each country's unique qualities determine this industry's impact at various economic growth stages. Tourism promotes socio-economic development by stimulating economic growth, generating employment opportunities, alleviating poverty, and fostering sustainable development, especially in rural and remote areas. According to a new report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), tourism is once again a vital engine of economic recovery and growth (IFM, 2024). Tourism leads to direct employment opportunities for many people in the country. Individuals are offered various jobs such as tour guides, hotel staff, drivers, and many others, and they get involved in the hospitality industry. Tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity, and sustainable use of natural resources (Yu, 2023). Tourism has been critical in sustainable development in many countries and regions worldwide. Tourism development has been used in developing countries as an essential strategy for increasing economic growth, alleviating poverty, creating jobs, and improving food security.

Sustainability, culture, heritage, and environmental conservation are crucial to tourism development and are a priority task for the state and the community (William, 2023). The development of the tourism sector is of great socio-economic importance. It involves efforts aimed at the tourist and recreational development of territories and increasing the share of the non-resource sector in the economy. Sustainable Tourism refers to sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry. It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative (William, 2023). Sustainable tourism aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones. They result from a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism. Sustainable tourism is categorized into four pillars: Sustainable management, Socio-economic impacts, Cultural impacts, and Environmental impacts (Thonner, 2023). Fennel (2020) described sustainability as eco-tourism, a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature and is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally-oriented. Sustainability typically occurs in natural areas and should contribute to the community's conservation or preservation of such areas.

Sustainable tourism development is directly related to strategic planning, involving the development and systematic implementation of concepts, strategies, programs, roadmaps, and master plans for the development of territories (Yu, 2023). Most documents on strategic planning in the tourism sector include a cluster approach, which contributes to the sustainable development of tourism and is an effective tool for the integrated management of territories and increasing the region's competitiveness (Tonya & Mbeye, 2017). In Tanzania, tourism planning, development, and management were aimed at the sustainable development of eco-tourism systematically linked to the existing set of programs for the community and socio-economic development (Ekstorn, 2023). Community-based tourism (CBT) ensures that local communities have full ownership and management of the tourism experience so that the economic benefits of tourism stay within their community (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Community-based means a facility, program or service, or open group home or other suitable place located near the home or family of the juvenile, and programs of community supervision and service that maintain community participation in their planning, operation, and evaluation (Bagus, 2019; Prakoso, Praditot, Roychasyah, & Nugraha, 2021). Local communities in rural areas carry out tourism, known as community-based Tourism (CBT). CBT can be defined as tourism owned and managed by the community and intended to provide more comprehensive community benefits in a participatory setting. Community-based management (CBM) is a bottom-up approach of organization facilitated by an upper government or NGO structure. Still, it aims for local stakeholder participation in the planning, research, development, management, and policy-making of a community as a whole (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Bagus, 2019). CBT is the concept of using a community in an area to support the existence of tourism in an area. Thus, sustainable development is characterized by using existing resources and paying attention to social and environmental aspects for the sustainability of these resources. Mbozi District is one of the Songwe region's districts; the others are Momba, Tunduma Town, and Ileje.

Traditional foods and sustainable tourism development are part and parcel of Mbozi, as the district has vast tourist attractions. The major tourist attractions in the Mbozi district include traditional foods, traditional healing, traditional dressing, traditional dancing, and the management of natural vegetation (URT, 1997). Investment potentials in Mbozi are tremendous in the district's natural resources sector. Wood processing industries, bee-keeping, and fishing are some of the significant economic activities undertaken on a commercial scale. Afforestation projects can also be undertaken in Iyula, Vwawa, Igamba, and Kamsamba Divisions by raising tree seedlings to sell to the people. The district also has tourist attractions like the Kimondo meteorite, the batty curves, chain mountains that may be used for walking tourism, and sausages produced from trees and roots (Lameck & Tonya, 2019). Despite all the potential of Community-Based Tourism, few initiatives have been done to harness traditional foods and participation of community for tourism development in Mbozi district. The objective of this paper was to use CBT as a tool to harness tourism using the available natural resources with a participatory approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of participatory management: This study was based on the theory of participatory management, which was propagated by Kurt Lewis (1939). Participatory management empowers group members, such as company employees or community citizens, to participate in organizational decision-making (Mwajombe & Tonya, 2017; Thonner, 2023). In participative management, important decisions are often taken collectively. Different stakeholders are set into group meetings, and open discussions and feedback processes are commonly used to reach consensus. The participatory approach allows most natural resources to have diverse perspectives within the community. Implementing a participative management approach requires commitment from management and supervisors and a well-thought-out approach to creating an environment conducive to employee involvement. Before getting started, it is essential to clearly define the vision and objectives of your participative management approach (Mwajombe & Tonya, 2017).

Psychoanalyst Robin S. Brown has promoted a participatory perspective in the context of relational psychoanalysis to foster clinical pluralism. Brown adopts a participatory reading of models to theorize alterity in the clinical situation. The participatory theory has been used widely by psychologists to direct the vision and guide throughout the process (Brown, 2016). However, in recent years, participatory theory has been used in business and hospitality (Al-Hagla, Azzam, & Eladway, 2020). This participatory knowing is multidimensional and includes all the powers of the human being (body/heart/soul), as understood from a transpersonal framework. The vision for participatory theory includes a spiritual reality that is plural and multiple and a spiritual power that may produce a wide range of revelations and insights, which in turn may be overlapping or even incompatible. Warner (1997) argues that the principles of the participatory approach include inclusion, equal partnership, transparency, sharing power, sharing responsibility, empowerment, and cooperation. The Warner principles are the variables for the theory of participatory management.

Ken Wilber (1993) argues that participatory epistemology is limited in its appropriate scope to observe the interior of a subjective plural domain. Ferrer argues that Wilber's criticisms of participatory theory have conflated pluralism with discourteous relativism (Warner, 1997).

Empirical Review

Community-Based Tourism: Community or community-based organization refers to an organization that aims to improve the community's social health, well-being, and overall functioning (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Community organization occurs geographically, psychosocially, culturally, spiritually, and digitally bounded in community planning. Community-based tourism is now an alternative to providing community welfare and empowerment for sustainable tourism (Bagus, 2019). Once the importance of community participation in village development becomes a sustainable tourism destination, it has encouraged Community Based Tourism (CBT). Communities in tourism destinations have a role in efforts to promote tourism destination products because local communities are the main component in forming tourism images. Once the importance of local community participation in developing sustainable tourism destinations has been acknowledged, other options for tourism development have been developed. The alternative is popularly known as community-based tourism (CBT). Giampiccoli & Saayman (2018) emphasized the critical aspect of sustainable tourism development is the emphasis on community-based tourism. The participatory approach focuses on involving local communities actively participating in the tourism planning and development process. Although conceptually, local community participation in tourism is believed to be able to realize the development of sustainable tourism destinations, it is full of challenges and obstacles (Al-Hagla, Azzam, & Eladway, 2020). CBT's challenges are mainly related to the heterogeneity of local communities and identifying tourism as a strategy for developing local communities (Ekstorn, 2023). The obstacles are in the form of the limitations of local communities in decision-making and distribution of the benefits of tourism for local communities. In harnessing the CBT, the study examines the problems in community-based tourism development and the strategies that can be done so that community-based tourism can be sustainable (sustainable). In Tanzania, therefore, the local and central government needs to develop strategies for the best use of human capital for tourism development through CBT.

Traditional food and tourism: Traditional foods are historically tied to a particular culture or region, often passed down from generation to generation. From Bantu tradition, food and meals hold strong connections to their places of origin with delicious Flavors and spices (Wang & Li, 2016; Laswai, Kogi-Makau, & Mwanri, 2011). Historically, Tanzania has been a crossroads of trade with the ancient Arab world and India, and this interaction influenced Tanzania's cuisine (Kibona & Yuejie, 2023). Today, some of the traditional foods found in Tanzania reflect Indian curries or spices or Persian ricedishes. However, Tanzania's culture has different traditional foods reflecting the environment; cooking with bananas or coconuts, roots, herbs, and fruits forms part of traditional food linked with tourism and plentiful across the country. Tanzania has over 100 distinct tribes with their

language, customs, and traditional foods (Robbin, 2014; Sudakova, 2024). Tribes originating along Lake Victoria or Lake Tanganyika commonly feature fresh fish in their traditional foods. In contrast, tribes from the highlands or agricultural regions (Mbozi) often use meat or corn as their main foods. The Songwe region's main tribes are the Nyiha, Malila, and Ndali, whose foods are related to traditions. The traditional foods from the Mbozi district include porridge made of millet or cassava, sausage made from trees, wild roots like potatoes, wild vegetables, cassava leaves, and beans, which need awareness to support tourism attraction.

Recourse Management and Tourism: Natural resource management manages how people and natural landscapes interact (Mathai, 2014; Al-Hagla, Azzam, & Eladway, 2020). Natural resources combine natural heritage management, land use planning, water management, biodiversity conservation, and the future sustainability of industries like agriculture, mining, tourism, fisheries, and forestry. Management of Natural resources is how communities manage the supply or access to the natural resources they depend on for survival and growth (Perfetto, Schez, & Presenza, 2016; Imon, 2017). In tourism, it is known that human beings are essentially dependent on natural resources (Rugwongan, 2019; Romaano, 2022). Maintaining stable access to or a continuous supply of natural resources has always been central to the organization of civilizations. It has historically been managed through several schemes of varying formality and participation from the central authority. Tanzania is rich in natural resources, including arable land, water, natural vegetation, minerals, forests, and wildlife. Natural tourism is discretionary travel to natural areas that conserves the environmental, social, and cultural values while generating an economic benefit to the local community. Natural tourism allows landowners to profit from conserving and managing their natural areas for recreation. Tourism pressures natural resources through over-consumption, often in places where resources are already scarce (Ramires-Guerrero, Onett, Chica-Ruize, & Arcila-Garrido, 2021). Tourism stresses local land use, leading to soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, and more pressure on endangered species.

The reasons why we manage natural resources include the need to monitor the usage and management of natural resources (Maldonado-Erazo, Rio-Rama, & Andino-Penafiel, 2023). Everything used today, including food, clothing, home, automobiles, electricity, books, furniture, cooking gas, utensils, toys, and roads, is acquired from Earth's natural resources. A large amount of energy consumed today comes from non-renewable sources, destroying the natural setting of resources. Natural resources are, therefore, irreplaceable after usage (Harma & Sharma, 2020). Managing natural resources guarantees their rational usage and sustainability of agricultural activities and tourism attraction. The main objective of this paper was to harness traditional foods involving local communities in managing and conserving these resources for tourism development and sustainability in the Mbozi district.

METHODOLOGY

The study explored the potential of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in the Mbozi Songwe region of Tanzania, focusing on the unique aspects of traditional foods and resource

management. The area of study was Iyula and Mlangali villages in Mbozi district. The villages were selected based on the villagers' interest in emphasizing traditional foods and heritage participatory management. The population of the study was 3,164 in the two villages (URT, 2022). The study design was a case study of the Mlangali and Iyula villages in Mbozi district. The study's sample size was purposive and selected from the two villages' critical persons of the heritage committee, accounting for 30 respondents, considering the saturation point for data collection. The study was qualitative, using interviews to collect data. Quantitative research can help develop more precise answers and simplify complexity; however, qualitative research is essential to provide different knowledge through a deeper understanding of the complexity, especially that of human behavior (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Qualitative study enables a more complex and thorough understanding of complex phenomena. Also, qualitative study captures the particular context and viewpoints of individuals within and offers valuable information that can guide decision-making; however, qualitative research is becoming increasingly important in education.

Quantitative methods in social science allow for systematic and objective data analysis, providing a more rigorous and reliable approach to understanding social phenomena. Qualitative research tends to form a baseline understanding of new or underexplored topics, and so findings from this study can contribute to the development of new assessment measures that ask people what they are thinking and feeling to help diagnose them and eventually treat them (Agius, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative research approach is concerned with participants' own experiences of a life event, and the aim is to interpret what participants have said to explain why they have said it. Thus, the qualitative approach enabled participants to express themselves openly and without constraint. The qualitative research approach, therefore, offers deep insights into human behaviour, provides context and understanding of complex issues, allows for flexibility in data collection, and helps uncover trends and patterns that quantitative data might miss (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, a systematic and objective approach to analyzing data by categorizing and quantifying specific words, themes, or concepts. The analysis process involves identifying patterns and relationships in the auditory content. Narrative analysis, after that, focuses on interpreting and understanding the stories and personal narratives individuals share. The study analyzed data on the content and meaning of these narratives to gain insights into individuals' views to make sense of their experiences, construct, and communicate their perspectives. Through narrative analysis techniques, the study explored the themes within a narrative, which led to understanding the CBT regarding traditional foods and resources management to support tourism sustainability.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study was interested to know the composition of sex in the CBT in Mbozi district for sustainable development. Data showed that, the distribution of male/female was well distributed. The study Table 1 shows that, 57% respondents were male, while 43% respondents were female.

The results indicate the importance of female inclusion is decision-making for development issues. The study has proven that there is a positive relationship between greater gender diversity and positive business performance. So, there is even a business case for having more women involved in tourism; their representation can be leveraged for better organizational performance. The results correspond to a report by Lwoga (2021), who noted that in many developing countries, women do not get efficient jobs related to tourism such as tour guides, cab drivers and hikers. On the other hand, tourism-related jobs easily accept men in the above-mentioned jobs due to various gender dimensions, women cannot take part effectively in planning and management.

Table 1. Sample Respondents

Demographic variable	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	17	57%
Female	13	43%

Traditional foods in Tanzania/Mbozi: Traditional foods are defined as food products in which the critical production steps are performed in a particular area at the national, regional, or local level, are authentic in their recipe (mix of ingredients), the origin of raw material, and production process, are commercially available for about 50 years and are part of the gastronomic heritage (Laswai, Kogi-Makau, & Mwanri, 2011). Traditional foods are products frequently consumed or associated with specific celebrations and seasons, customarily transmitted from generation to generation (Reinders, Banovic, & Guerrero, 2024). Traditional foods are also made accurately and precisely according to the culinary heritage, with little or no processing/manipulation. The foods are distinguished and known because of their sensory properties (Robbin, 2014). Traditional food habits in Tanzania are deeply rooted in cultural heritage and have evolved over centuries. They are characterized by using locally available ingredients, seasonal produce, and cooking techniques that enhance the natural flavours of food. Common foods in Tanzanian cuisine include beans and cassava leaves, while staples like rice and ugali form the backbone of many meals. Traditional food is an integral part of any culture and plays a significant role in preserving a community's heritage and identity; therefore, traditional foods are part and parcel of tourism. It embodies a culture's history, customs, and values and maintains a society's cultural diversity and richness. Traditional foods contribute a sense of comfort and belonging. It brings families together and enables people to reconnect with friends of the same ethnic group. Traditional foods also reinforce values such as freedom, faith, integrity, a good education, personal responsibility, a strong work ethic, and selflessness.

Food tourism may be defined as visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific locations for which food tasting and experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factors for travel (Imon, 2017; Ekstorn, 2023). Food tourism includes activities such as taking cooking classes, going on food or drink tours, attending seed and food festivals, participating in speciality dining experiences, shopping at speciality retail spaces, and visiting farms, markets, and producers (Nyirongo, 2024).

In Mbozi, the residents are wealthy in traditional food. The foods found in Mbozi include Ugali, the main dish for everyone to enjoy, wild vegetables and fruits, roots, beans, and green peas. Discussing the issue of traditional foods, it was noted that, in Mbozi, the main dish is *Ugali* with beans. However, maize is sometimes boiled and mixed with beans, which is called *kande*. A family never misses the consumption of *Kande* in a week. It was known that, despite having *ugali* with beans, every dish is backed up with wild vegetables and/or fruits. The respondents showed interest in telling the traditional foods, from roots known as *numbu*, which can be eaten without cooking or cooked. From the barks of trees, the Mbozi has cooked meat like sausage known as *Kinaka*. The *Kinaka* is cooked and backed with a mixture of groundnut flowers, which are eaten as sausage with *ugali*. The traditional foods from Mbozi can be important for tourism attraction and business to sustain residents' development. Traditional ethnic cuisine from Mbozi is reasonably healthy, and the respondents agreed that no malnutrition was experienced in the study area. The alleviated malnutrition is believed to be associated with traditional culinary. Also, with traditional foods, during the discussion, it was known that, in Mbozi, the wild mushroom is harvested during the rainy seasons. The respondents agreed that a high collection of wild mushrooms is a sign of good prevention of natural vegetation. Mushroom has higher nutrients for nursing women and babies. The mushroom is either cooked fresh or dried for off-season. However, modernization has focused on speed and taste rather than wholesome nutrition. This translates into high-calorie, high-fat, processed food with sodium, complex sugars, and questionable additives.

Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage Preservation:

Cultural heritage reflects society, and its preservation is vital for maintaining cultural diversity, fostering a sense of belonging, and passing down knowledge to future generations (Imon, 2017; William, 2023). Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in lives and history, influencing the values, beliefs, and sense of belonging. Cultural heritage includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, archive materials, books, works of art, and artefacts), intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity) (Yodsurang, Kiatthanarat, Sanoamung, Krasean, & Pinjvarsin, 2022). The conservation of cultural heritage and resources refers to the measures taken to extend the life of cultural heritage while strengthening the transmission of its significant heritage messages and values (Diwas, 2024). Cultural heritage is central to protecting our sense of who we are (Fennel, 2020). Natural and cultural heritage preservation gives a community an irrefutable connection to the past to specific social values, beliefs, customs, and traditions, allowing us to identify with others and deepen our sense of unity, belonging, and national pride.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism is the government ministry of Tanzania responsible for managing natural and cultural resources and developing the tourism industry (UNWTO, 2019; Lwoga, 2021). The Ministry has various investments in various tourist resources and tourism industry projects. Tourism resources encompass natural landscapes, cultural sites, recreational activities, accommodation, and infrastructure that attract and enhance

visitor experiences in destinations worldwide (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Natural resources contribute to the diversity and appeal of tourism offerings globally. All the things need to survive, such as food, water, air, and shelter, come from natural resources. Some of these resources, like small plants, can be replaced quickly. Others, like large trees, take a long time to replace. In tourism terminology, any natural/scenic beauty that humans do not consider a natural tourism resource, such as Mountains, Rivers, Sea, Waterfalls, Hill Stations, and Wildlife Centuries (Harma & Sharma, 2020). Tourism management refers to handling and supervising activities related to the tourism industry. The management of natural resources in Tanzania is vested in the Ministry responsible for resources and Tourism. However, the Ministry has mandated the local governments to manage local resources in the locality. The role of natural resources and cultural heritage in Mbozi is vested to traditional Chiefs with the assistance of the village resources management committees. The practice is the continuation of doctrine from the era before colonization that the natural resources belong to traditional Chiefs around the area. During the interview, it was learned that Chiefs are mandated to monitor and punish whoever misuses natural resources. The preservation practice relates to countries like Thailand, where heritage preservation is a community-based concern (Lameck & Tonya, 2019; Yodsurang *et al.*, 2022). Cultural preservation of heritage in Mbozi is well done with the use of traditional Chiefs by assigning guides who are volunteers to conserve the natural resources. The study wanted to know the motive for the volunteers' volunteerism in guiding the natural heritage, and the answer was that the community is aware of the benefits of heritage, specifically of natural vegetation and forests. The respondents said they benefit significantly from getting essential fruits, vegetables, and medicines for their livelihood. Therefore, the community preserving heritage is mandatory for all the people around Mbozi with the leadership of traditional Chiefs.

Community-Based Tourism in Mbozi: Community-based tourism is where the money earned directly benefits the whole community; the community could be a village, cooperative, or collective, and the benefits should be financial (Lwoga, 2021; Ekstorn, 2023). The community participates in planning, managing, and managing tourism and controlling profits. The local community's involvement in the management process is vital because tourism often centres around their way of life, environment, culture, and traditions, which attract tourists (Diwas, 2024). CBT provides employment opportunities, revenue generation, and local procurement of goods and services, and it limits the funds that leave the community (Bagus, 2019). Also, CBT helps diversify economic activities beyond farming, which reduces risk in years when climate change produces low or no yield. Tourism is a driver for peace in the way it helps promote tolerance between people as they learn and better understand each other's cultures (Darmi, Miftakhulu, & Nusantara, 2023). CBT, however, preserves heritage, and tourism can help protect and finance the preservation of historic and cultural sites and even prompt the creation of new community initiatives. During the study in Mbozi, to understand the CBT and the management and development of tourist sites, respondents believed they were aware of the community participating in tourism and their benefits.

The respondents are happy with how the Chiefs participate in the community in resource management in Mbozi. It was also known that through the leadership of Chiefs in collaboration with the local government, they have participated in all communities around the natural resources to preserve the potential of the proposed site for tourism. The procedures are the same as noted by Al-Hagla *et al.* (2020), who summarized that community participation improves management challenges. Community development involves sustainable development, empowerment, inclusivity, social justice, human rights, participative democracy, and equality. These community-led programs led by specific communities aim to address the challenges and gaps oppressing the community members. The respondents noted that tourism benefits local communities in several ways. Economic benefits include local economic stimulation, job creation, and infrastructure development, and social and cultural benefits include improved quality of life and social cohesion. The importance of CBT was also emphasized by Rugwonga (2019) and Nyirongo (2024), noting that community-based tourism facilities programs or services, or open group homes or other suitable places located near the home or family of the youthful, and programs of community supervision and service which maintain community participation in their planning, operation, and evaluation.

Challenged Managing Natural resources and harnessing Tourism in Mbozi: The challenges for tourism management in Tanzania range from direct effects, including environmental damage, wildlife destruction, deforestation, and water pollution, and to indirect effects, such as increased harvesting of natural resources to supply food, indirect air, and water pollution (including from flights, transport and the manufacture of food and souvenirs for tourists) (Ngonya, 2015). The location and the importance of Challenges facing Tanzania include a country that faces significant challenges in achieving sustainable development and economic and social stability. It is bordered by poverty, ignorance, lack of funding, and environmental imbalances (Laswai, Kogi-Makau, & Mwanri, 2011). The study wanted to know whether the challenges cut across Tanzania, including Mbozi.

The study's findings showed that challenges ranged from lack of government support, education, and training, poor infrastructure, poor marketing strategies, lack of community support, insecurity, and poor customer care service. The respondents argued the government should support the initiative of indigenous knowledge enhanced by the traditional Chiefs in collaboration with the community. Despite disagreeing with the modern control of tourism sites, the government needs to support community initiatives to alleviate these challenges. The argument is in line with the study by Al-Hagla (2020) and Fennel (2020), who noted the need for the government to support the CBT initiatives in natural conservation as an essential area for tourism development and management. The respondents said that sustainable use of natural resources helps preserve the environment and reduce pollution, protecting human health and ecosystems. It also helps conserve resources for future generations, ensuring our descendants can access the same materials. This relates to studies by (Imon, 2017; Mathai, 2014; Al-Hagla, Azzam, & Eladway, 2020; Romaano, 2022). All the studies concluded that conserving natural resources is essential for sustainable development as the demand for resources exceeds the Earth's

capacity to regenerate, leading to environmental deterioration and poverty traps. Sustainable management can ensure the equitable distribution of natural resources; therefore, all humans can benefit from developing those resources. Conservation is caring for these resources so all living things can benefit from them now and in the future.

Conclusion, Recommendations, and Policy Implications

CONCLUSION

The study underscores the significant role of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in promoting sustainable development in the Mbozi Songwe region of Tanzania, mainly through the preservation of traditional foods and the responsible management of natural resources. CBT has the potential to empower local communities, foster economic growth, and preserve cultural heritage. The research highlights that local involvement in tourism management and conservation efforts is essential for maintaining biodiversity, enhancing food security, and sustaining tourism initiatives. Traditional foods such as Ugali, wild vegetables, and roots form a critical part of the local culture, and their conservation through CBT can attract tourism while enhancing community resilience. Furthermore, traditional leaders and community participation in resource management are crucial for achieving sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen Training and Capacity Building: Implementing training programs and capacity-building initiatives is essential to empower local communities to manage CBT effectively. These programs should focus on enhancing local knowledge of tourism management, resource conservation, and entrepreneurial skills.

Government Support and Policy Formulation: The government should provide more substantial support through policies encouraging CBT and prioritizing conserving traditional foods and natural resources. Collaborative efforts between government agencies and local communities will be vital for long-term sustainability.

Marketing and Infrastructure Development: Invest in better infrastructure and marketing strategies to promote Mbozi as a CBT destination. The region can attract more tourists by improving road networks, accommodation facilities, and online marketing platforms, thus boosting local economic growth.

Collaborative Partnerships: Encourage partnerships between local communities, non-governmental organizations, and international stakeholders to provide financial, technical, and logistical support for CBT development. Such collaborations can enhance the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental conservation.

Support for Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Recognize and integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into tourism management practices. Traditional methods of resource conservation and food preparation should be documented,

preserved, and showcased as part of the region's tourism offerings.

Enhancing Community Ownership: To ensure the long-term success of CBT, local communities must have greater ownership and control over tourism activities. The ownership can be achieved by fostering community-led decision-making processes and ensuring that tourism revenues are reinvested in community development initiatives.

Policy Implications: The findings of this study on Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in the Mbozi Songwe region of Tanzania highlight several critical policy implications for government bodies, tourism practitioners, and development agencies aiming to promote sustainable tourism development:

Integration of Community-Based Tourism into National Tourism Strategies: The Tanzanian government should integrate CBT as a core component of its national tourism strategy. By doing so, policies can emphasize community participation, preservation of traditional foods, and sustainable natural resource management. The integration would promote inclusivity in tourism development and ensure economic benefits flow directly to local communities.

Development of Sustainable Food Systems: Policy-makers should promote and support the conservation and promotion of traditional foods within the broader food security and tourism agenda. Regulations aimed at protecting traditional food practices, sustainable farming, and resource management can further enhance the cultural and tourism appeal of regions like Mbozi.

Support for Local Governance and Traditional Leadership: The involvement of traditional leaders and local governance structures in tourism and resource management should be reinforced through policies that formalize their role. Legal frameworks should protect and empower these traditional structures to ensure they have a legitimate role in natural resource conservation and tourism management.

Incentives for Community Ownership and Environmental Stewardship: Policy frameworks should incentivize community ownership of tourism projects through grants, subsidies, or tax breaks for CBT initiatives. Additionally, policies should offer environmental conservation incentives, such as rewarding communities that implement sustainable practices in natural resource management.

Infrastructure Investment and Sustainable Tourism Development: The government should create policies encouraging public-private partnerships to invest in infrastructure critical to CBT, such as roads, eco-friendly accommodations, and tourism facilities. Infrastructure development should align with environmental conservation policies to minimize ecological impact.

Promotion of Research and Documentation: A national policy should encourage continuous research and documentation of traditional food systems, natural resources, and community-based conservation practices. Promoting research will help preserve cultural heritage and inform future policy-making, ensuring CBT aligns with the country's long-term sustainability and cultural preservation goals. By

implementing these policy recommendations, Tanzania can harness CBT as a powerful tool for socio-economic development while preserving its rich cultural and natural heritage. Capacity Building and Education Policy: Policies should mandate the creation of educational and capacity-building programs designed to equip local communities with the knowledge and skills to manage CBT and natural resources effectively. Policy implementation could be done by introducing vocational training in schools and through community workshops focused on tourism management, entrepreneurship, and environmental conservation.

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