

# Exploring the hurdles of community-based tourism: The case of Bandarban in Bangladesh

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Received 15 June 2024  
Revised 23 July 2024  
Accepted 16 August 2024

**Citation:** Habiba, M. (2024). Exploring the hurdles of community-based tourism: The case of Bandarban in Bangladesh. *Journal of Management, Economics, and Industrial Organization*, 8(3), 1-17.  
<http://doi.org/10.31039/jomeino.2024.831>



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## Abstract

Being one of the most attractive places for adventure tourists, home to 11 tribal communities with their unique and colorful culture, Bandarban has enormous potential for community-based tourism (CBT) development in many areas. However, in the development process, many challenges are being faced by the locals. Thus, this project is conducted to identify the hurdles to implementing community-based tourism in Bandarban. From the literature, nine independent variables were identified to test through regression analysis, and seven were significant. Significant variables that cause hurdles to CBT development are language barriers, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training facilities, shortage of trained human resources, limited access to information, increased cost of living, and limited community involvement in decision-making. The study further found that the local community in Bandarban has sufficient knowledge about CBT and is optimistic about the tourists and CBT development, which can benefit future development. Further study suggests the stakeholder analysis to get an insight into each stakeholder's involvement in the CBT development process.

**Keywords:** Community-based tourism, CBT, Hurdles of CBT, perception of local community, community empowerment and involvement.

**JEL Code:** L83, Z3, Z32

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## 1. Introduction

Tolkach et al. (2013) addressed community-based tourism (CBT) as an alternative form of tourism for developing host communities through capacity building and community empowerment. In literature, CBT has been presented as a tool to benefit the local community through their active participation in planning, decision-making, profit sharing, and overall preservation of their cultural heritage (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Moscardo, 2008; Scheyvens, 1991; Zapata et al., 2013). People have embraced the concept of CBT due to its comprehensive benefit towards local community development; for instance, it widens the job opportunities for residents (Gu & Ryan, 2008), increases the income of the local people (Belisle & Hoy, 1980), better quality livelihood for local (Liu & Var, 1986; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008), strengthen local economy (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004), and attracts outside investment (Dyer et al., 2007).

Gursoy & Rutherford (2004) illustrate active community participation as key to the success of tourism development. Communities in rural areas, indigenous people, and people from ethnic minorities can be facilitated from the CBT development initiative. Novelli & Gebhardt (2007); Salleh et al. (2016) addressed the need for community involvement to get the maximum benefit from a CBT project. Pearce et al. (1996) argued that the perception of the host community towards CBT development plays a significant role in community involvement in tourism development. As the minds of the community people are not homogenous, their perception and attitude towards tourism can vary, which may affect the development (Lepp, 2008). Hence, this study is conducted to understand the knowledge, perception, and attitude of the local people of Bandarban towards CBT development. This will help the researcher understand the local's view toward CBT (Williamson & Lawson, 2001) and help establish a recommendation.

Developing a community through community-based tourism may sound like a wonderful idea, but in reality, numerous challenges come in the way of CBT development (Sheyvens, 2002). Kwan & McCartney (2005); Liu & Var (1986); Perdue et al. (1990) explained that when tourism developed in an area, it contributes to the increase in the living cost for local people, which might end up in the rise in their price of housing and land (Belisle & Hoy, 1980), and the excessive tourism demand can create deficit in the local goods (Pizam, 1978). Identifying challenges is necessary to undertake necessary precautions in advance, which may smooth the implementation of development. Thus, it is necessary to identify the challenges associated with CBT development. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is the cultural capital of Bangladesh, and Bandarban is the heart of CHT. Several CBT projects are going on in different areas in Bandarban. The main aim of this project is to explore the challenges that can cause barriers in the way of CBT project implementation in Bandarban. Based on the identified challenges, some recommendations will also be suggested in the conclusion, which may play a vital role in dealing with those hurdles. This leaves room for further

investigation into where the challenges are rooted, like stakeholder analysis of the CBT project and ways to strengthen the CBT development.

This paper has been structured in five different sections. In the introduction, a brief overview of the topic has been provided, along with the importance of the topic and the rationale for choosing the topic. The research aim has been clearly stated in this section. In the literature review, the concept of CBT has been enlightened, along with its benefits and challenges. Similar studies have been reviewed to find the research gap, and later, the contribution of this study has been explained. The study design, chosen method, data collection and data analysis tools, and information about the data sources have been demonstrated in the methodology chapter. After that, the collected data has been interpreted in the results section. Finally, the study findings and summary have been written in the conclusion section.

## **2. Literature Review**

Suansri (2003) demonstrated community-based tourism (CBT) as a form of tourism managed and owned by the local community to attract visitors to showcase their culture and lifestyle. Since the 1970s, the idea of CBT started to spread (Reid et al., 2004) as a tool to alleviate poverty and develop rural tourism (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). Eventually, CBT has been accepted as an alternative form of tourism that can empower the local community (Tolkach et al., 2013). In literature, four dimensions of community empowerment have been addressed: economic, psychological, social, and political (Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Scheyvens, 1999; Scheyvens, 2002); cited in (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). Economic empowerment is one of the primary concerns of CBT development, which deals with promoting local businesses, providing economic benefits to the local people, and building the capacity of the residents (Lucchetti & Font, 2013). Both political and psychological empowerment concern local participation in the decision-making process and ensuring stakeholder collaboration in CBT projects (Scheyvens, 1999). Community social empowerment focuses on increasing the standard of livelihood of locals (Scheyvens, 2002) and empowering the local women (Dunn, 2007).

Okazaki (2008) argued that the local people's perception of tourism development is highly affected by the level of economic activity in the development. On the other hand, Dangi & Jamal (2016) describe that not only economic activity is significant, but the social cost is also significant to shape the community's perception of tourism. If it appears to the local community that their identity can be endangered because of tourism, their attitude toward tourism can be hostile. Therefore, locals' negative perceptions and attitudes towards tourism can be a concerning challenge for CBT development (Tamir, 2015). Alongside the numerous prospects of CBT development, there are some hurdles that the CBT project faced in its journey. Nomnian et al. (2020) explore in their study

that the community people of Chiang Rai and Buriram in Thailand need help with the English language for communicating with tourists. Dolezal & Novelli (2022) also mention language difficulties as a challenge for CBT development. In various literature, community participation has been shown as a key to the success of CBT projects, whereas Setokoe & Ramukumba (2020) illustrated that community participation is challenging for the locals because of the language barrier, conflict in leadership, involvement in decision-making and inadequate government support. For proper development, the CBT site must have proper infrastructure (Setokoe & Ramukumba, 2020), Jugmohan et al. (2016) found the need for infrastructure as a challenge in Noqhekwane study. Bello et al. (2017); Kaplan (2004) explained lack of proper human resources could hamper community participation; most of the community does not have learning centers (Nomnian et al., 2020) or training institutions, which results in unskilled human resources in the community.

To develop a community through tourism, they must be involved in the tourism activity, but literature shows a gap in the knowledge of residents about tourism (Gascón, 2013; Khartishvili et al., 2020; Reindrawati, 2023) and community-based tourism, most cases the community also lacks the proper information about the recent trends in tourism (Reindrawati, 2013). Mbaiwa (2004) blamed the project authority for not letting the community have full ownership of the project, whereas Gascón (2013); Sebele (2010); Stone & Stone (2011) explained the lack of local participation in decision-making as one of the main challenges for CBT development.

Bandarban is one of Bangladesh's most prominent and lucrative places for adventure tourists because of its breathtaking natural beauty and landscape (Haque et al., 2016). People from different tribes added value to the interest of tourists through their unique culture and tradition. In Bandarban, community-based tourism has been practiced for quite some time now. Despite the popularity of CBT in Bandarban, the locals still need help with numerous challenges. Very few studies have been conducted to identify the hurdles of CBT development in Bandarban; hence, this study explores the hurdles of CBT implementation in Bandarban. This study will contribute to developing proper policy for the CBT initiative in Bandarban, and the tourism planner will be able to take necessary precautions for future challenges beforehand.

### **3. Methodology**

Bandarban, home to the largest peak in Bangladesh and one of the central tourist hubs in CHT, is situated in the southern part of Bangladesh. Bandarban is famous for its magnificent scenic beauty, stunning trekking route, breathtaking landscape, and diverse indigenous cultures. It is one of the most prominent places for CBT development in Bangladesh, and in different places in Bandarban, such as Ruma, Thanchi, Lama, and Alikodom, CBT has already been practiced. In the way of CBT

development, the community can face various challenges, which can hamper the development. In the literature, only some mention of these challenges in CHT has been addressed, which motivates the researcher of this paper to research the challenges associated with CBT development in Bandarban.

This study followed the quantitative research approach to achieving the study goal. To perform the regression analysis, the researcher identified one dependent variable (Y= challenges of community development through CBT) and nine independent variables. Through a rigorous search in the literature, these nine independent variables have been selected. The following table shows the dependent and independent variables and the sources of the independent variable.

**Table 1:** Dependent & Independent Variables with their respected sources

<b>Y= Dependent Variable</b>	<b>X<sub>i</sub>= Independent</b>	<b>Sources from literature</b>
<b>Y= challenges of community development through CBT</b>	X <sub>1</sub> Language barrier	Setokoe & Ramukumba, (2020);
	X <sub>2</sub> Inadequate infrastructure	Jugmohan et al., (2016)
	X <sub>3</sub> Insufficient training facilities	Nomnian et al., (2020)
	X <sub>4</sub> Shortage of trained human resources	Bello et al., (2017); Kaplan, (2004)
	X <sub>5</sub> Lack of local understanding of CBT	Gascón, (2013); Khartishvili et al., (2020); Reindrawati, (2023)
	X <sub>6</sub> Negative perception and attitude of community towards CBT	(Tamir, 2015)
	X <sub>7</sub> Limited access to information	Reindrawati, (2013)
	X <sub>8</sub> Increase in costs of living	Kwan & McCartney, (2005); Liu & Var, (1986); Perdue et al., (1990)
	X <sub>9</sub> Limited community involvement in decision-making	Gascón, (2013); Sebele, (2010); Stone & Stone, (2011)

Both primary and secondary sources are used to collect for this project. Secondary data has been collected from books, publications, journal articles, and other online historical data. To collect the primary data for quantitative analysis, the researcher has prepared a structured questionnaire (Mohajan, 2018). Then, the survey was performed on 150 respondents from different areas of Bandarban. After collecting the data, the data was analyzed by using two analytical tools one is Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), and the other one is MS\_ Excel.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Socio-demographic profile

**Table 2:** Socio-demographic information of the participants

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b><u>Gender</u></b>		<b><u>Age</u></b>	
Male	64%	18-30	28%
Female	36%	31-40	48%
		41-50	17%
		51-60	5%
		61 and above	2%
<b><u>Education</u></b>		<b><u>Monthly Income</u></b>	
Below SSC	34%	Below 10,000 BDT	31%
SSC/HSC	63%	BDT 10,000-30,000	55%
Graduation level	3%	BDT 31,000-50,000	12%
Post-graduation level and above	0%	BDT 51,000-70,000	2%
		Above BDT 70,000	0%
<b><u>Community the respondent belong</u></b>		<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	
Bengali	5%	Business	29%
Marma	18%	Service	32%
Chakma	21%	Farmer	35%
Tripura	9%	Other	4%
Bawm	34%		
Tanchangya	6%		
Lishei	3%		
Others	4%		

*Source:* Own Survey

The above table represents the demographic information of the respondents who participated in the survey. Most of our respondents, around 64%, are male, and most participants are 18-30 and 31-40. 63% of the participants have completed either SSC or HSC, only 3% completed the graduation level, and the rest 34% have an education level below SSC. As Bandarban is the home of different indigenous communities, 34% of the respondents of this survey are Bawm, 21% are Chakma, 18% are Marma, 6% are Tanchangya, 5% are Bengali, 3% are Lishei, and the rest, and 4% belong of some other communities. In the occupation, 35% of them are farmers, 29% are involved in business, 32% are doing service, and 4% are involved in some other occupation.

## 4.2 Knowledge and Skill of the respondents about CBT

The level of knowledge of the community people about community-based tourism can affect CBT development. They were asked two questions to understand the community's knowledge about CBT. Table 3 shows us the result of the knowledge of the local community about CBT. According to the table, when the respondents were asked if they had ever heard the term “Community-based tourism”, 95 of them said yes that they had heard the term, and 55 of them said that they had never heard of this term, which is 63% and 37%, respectively.

**Table 3:** Knowledge of the respondents about CBT

Question	Response criteria	Response Count	Percent
Did you ever hear the term “Community-based tourism”?	Yes	95	63%
	No	55	37%
<b>Total=</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>
If yes, then do you know what Community-based tourism (CBT) means?	Yes	52	55%
	a little bit	28	29%
	No	15	16%
<b>Total=</b>		<b>95</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Own Survey

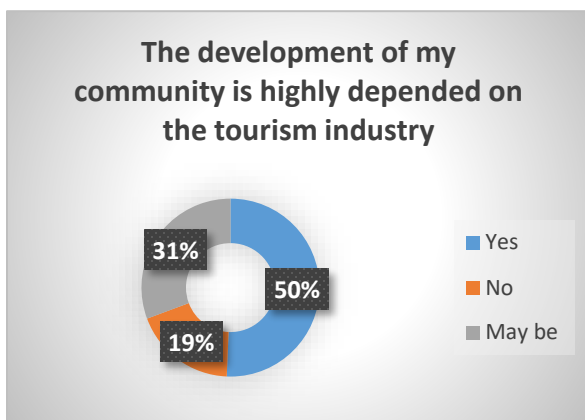
To check their knowledge further, the respondents who had said that they had heard the term CBT were asked if they knew the meaning of CBT or not. Fifty-two respondents said that they knew the meaning, 28 of them said that they knew a little bit about CBT, and 15 said that they did not know the meaning of CBT.

Lack of knowledge is considered one of the most prominent hindrances to development. Here, we can see that most people from the Chittagong hill tracts do not know the meaning of CBT, and most do not even hear the term CBT. From the analysis, the respondents' lack of knowledge about CBT can be considered a challenge to CBT development in the CHT.

### 4.3 Attitude and perception of the respondents towards CBT

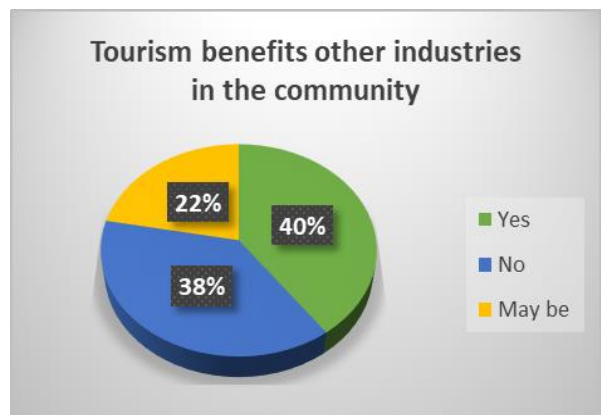
The community people's perception and attitude are another significant factor in developing community-based tourism in the CHT areas. To identify the perception of different community people of CHT towards CBT development, they were asked two different questions. The first statement the respondents must comment on is "The development of my community is highly dependent on the tourism industry," shown in Figure 1. In response to this statement, 50% of the respondents said yes, they agree with this point, 31% are unsure about their answer, and the rest, 19% disagree.

**Figure 1:** Tourism dependency of the community



Source: Own Survey

**Figure 2:** Tourism dependency of the community



Source: Own Survey

Figure 2 stated that 40% of the respondents believed that tourism benefits other industries within their community, 38% said no, disagreed that tourism benefits other industries within their community, and the rest 22% were unsure about their response to this statement.

#### Respondent's feeling towards visitors

**Table 4:** Respondent's feeling towards visitors

Question	Response criteria	Response Count	Percent
Do you appreciate the coming of tourists?	Yes	97	65%
	No	53	35%
<b>Total=</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>
How do you feel when you meet tourists?	Happy	87	58%
	Indifferent	63	42%
<b>Total=</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Own Survey



Table 4 displays the respondents' feelings toward the visitors, which is also essential in community development through CBT. Most people from the community appreciate the tourist's visit and feel happy to see the tourist in their areas. On the other hand, many people in different communities in CHT do not appreciate the tourist's visit to their community. The above table states that 65% of the respondents appreciate the coming of tourists in their community. On the contrary, 35% of them do not appreciate the coming of tourists in their community. 58% of the people are happy to meet new tourists in their community, but 42% are not happy or feel indifferent when they meet new tourists.

#### 4.4 Result of the regression analysis

**Table 5:** Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Challenges of community development through CBT	150	2.00	5.00	4.0467	.74489
Language barrier	150	2.00	5.00	4.2533	.67741
Inadequate infrastructure	150	2.00	5.00	3.8533	.71781
Insufficient training facilities	150	2.00	5.00	3.9467	.68333
Shortage of trained human resources	150	2.00	5.00	4.0067	.78147
Limited access to information	150	2.00	5.00	4.0000	.71419
Negative perception and attitude of community towards CBT	150	2.00	5.00	3.9200	.76430
Lack of local understanding of CBT	150	2.00	5.00	3.8333	.83076
Increase in costs of living	150	2.00	5.00	4.2067	.74453
Limited community involvement in decision-making	150	2.00	5.00	4.2333	.78933
Valid N (listwise)	150				

*Source:* Own Survey

Table 5 shows the descriptive study of this research. Here, we can see the mean and std-deviation of the data in this study. The mean value of a maximum number of variables is above four, which

means the study is significant. According to the table, the language barrier (Mean value of 4.25) has the highest mean value, representing one of the main challenges for community development through CBT. On the other hand, limited community involvement in decision-making (Mean value 4.23), increase in costs of living (Mean value 4.20), shortage of trained human resources (Mean value 4.01), and limited access to information (Mean value 4.00) are also highly related with the dependent variable. The mean value of the dependent variable is 4.0467, which means that the development of the community through CBT in CHT is challenging.

### Coefficients

**Table 6: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.855	.212		-4.028	.000
Language barrier	.098	.048	.089	2.018	.046
Inadequate infrastructure	.123	.047	.118	2.624	.010
Insufficient training facilities	.222	.061	.203	3.661	.000
Shortage of trained human resources	.119	.044	.125	2.725	.007
Limited access to information	.116	.051	.111	2.290	.024
Negative perception and attitude of community towards CBT	.068	.045	.069	1.492	.138
Lack of local understanding of CBT	.080	.041	.089	1.935	.055
Increase in costs of living	.232	.058	.232	4.027	.000
Limited community involvement in decision-making	.154	.051	.163	2.986	.003

*Source: SPSS output.*

Table 6 represents the Coefficients of the dependent and independent variables, where we can see the degree of influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The equation of the regression analysis is provided below.

$$Y = -.855 + .098X_1 + .123X_2 + .222X_3 + .119X_4 + .116X_5 + .068X_6 + .080X_7 + .232X_8 + .154X_9$$

The P-value of the seven independent variables (language barrier, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training facilities, shortage of trained human resources, limited access to information, increase in costs of living, and limited community involvement in decision-making) among nine independent variables is below 0.05, which means those seven independent variables have significantly high influence on the dependent variable.

**Table 7: Model Summary**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.904 <sup>a</sup>	.818	.806	.32777

*Source:* SPSS output.

The above model summary shows the value of R, R<sup>2</sup>, adjusted R<sup>2</sup>, and estimated Std-Error. The R-value is 0.9, the value of R<sup>2</sup> is 0.82, and the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.81. As we can see, the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> have a relatively high value, which means this study has a high significant value. 82% of the total variability in the challenges of community development through CBT has been estimated by this regression analysis.

**Table 8: ANOVA**

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	67.633	9	7.515	69.949	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	15.040	140	.107		
	Total	82.673	149			

*Source:* SPSS output.

By looking at the p-value in the ANOVA table, which is less than alpha .05, this model is significant. This analysis aimed to find the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable; the variability test presented in the ANOVA table presented an acceptable result. This study is statistically significant, and the regression model has been proven to fit perfectly.

## 5. Conclusions

This study intended to explore the challenges that can cause barriers to CBT project implementation in Bandarban. From the literature, different variables have been identified that can cause hurdles, such as language barrier, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training facilities, shortage of trained human resources, limited access to information, negative perception and

attitude of the community towards CBT, lack of local understanding of CBT, increase in costs of living, and limited community involvement in decision-making. The variables were later tested through the regression analysis, and it found that except for the negative perception and attitude of the community towards CBT and lack of local understanding of CBT, all the other variables have a significant relationship with the dependent variable, which is the challenges of community development through CBT. The study also found that the local community in Bandarban has a significant knowledge of CBT and is optimistic about the CBT initiative and towards the tourists. If this is so, why are there so many hurdles in developing CBT in Bandarban? The local authority should give serious thought to CBT development by minimizing the challenges associated with it.

Proper infrastructure should be developed to support the needs of the tourists, which will benefit the tourists and alleviate the local people's lifestyle. The local people should be given proper training to develop their skills in tourism businesses, and the community should be involved in the decision-making process of CBT. Additionally, the community should actively participate throughout the process to benefit from the CBT project. Community participation and involvement will empower the community by giving them a sense of ownership, which will help them manage their tourism business. Local authorities should provide local community training in languages like Bangla and English to reduce the language barrier. If proper training is given to the local people, it is possible to get a skilled workforce from the locals. Besides training programs, the campaign can be arranged to create local awareness about the tourism businesses and their possible benefit from the business. The CBT development should be sustainable; hence, it should focus on cultural preservation and environmental conservation. If the host community, tourists, and local authorities act responsibly throughout the CBT development process, it is possible to ensure such development, which will be sustained in the long run without hampering the environment and local culture.

The study's findings have some practical aspects to them, such as the positive attitude of the local community towards tourists, and the CBT project can have real benefits in case of CBT implementation. If the local community accepts the tourists with an open heart, it will excite the targeted tourists. This research can guide the local authority to take the necessary initiative to minimize those hurdles and maximize the benefits of the CBT project for the local community. However, this research only represents the data from a small region of Bangladesh; there is an opportunity for future research on this topic, which may include the broader context. The sample size is relatively small, with only 150 local people from different areas of Bandaban. Further studies may include other stakeholders of tourism development to identify their roles in CBT and their relation to each other. Future research should also include possible ways to deal with the identified challenges.

## 6. Suggestions and Recommendations

This study mainly explores the main challenges associated with CBT development in Bandarban, Bangladesh. Nine independent variables are examined to identify their influence on dependent variables (community development challenges through CBT). Seven independent variables have a significant relationship with the dependent variable. Significant variables are language barrier, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training facilities, shortage of trained human resources, limited access to information, increased cost of living, and limited community involvement in decision-making. These are all crucial hurdles in the development of CBT. The author provides some suggestions and recommendations for dealing with these challenges.

- Different indigenous tribes reside in Bandarban and have their own language. Most of the community members from remote areas of Bandarban are not fluent in Bangla. That creates a language barrier between the tourist and the host. Local authorities should arrange training programs in languages like Bangla and English.
- Remote areas of Bandarban are not facilitated with adequate tourism facilities and infrastructure. Tourism infrastructure like roads, waste management systems, and sanitation facilities should be developed in collaboration with the government and other NGOs. Infrastructure development in Bandarban should focus on sustainable, eco-friendly solutions such as rainwater harvesting, solar power, and eco-lodges.
- Because of the area's remoteness, Bandarban left behind in arranging training facilities for the community members. The authority should focus on arranging training facilities for the accessible community. Collaboration with volunteers from university and college graduates can also help with training facility arrangements.
- Most people from different communities are not very aware of tourism-related businesses and need to be more skilled to operate them independently. Supervision from local authorities is required in those cases. They also need capacity-building programs to enhance their knowledge and skills in diverse tourism-related fields. Mentorship programs within the community also can benefit in skill development.
- Because of the poor network connection in remote areas, the community members are not often aware of the recent tourism trends and market information. Information dissemination workshops can reduce this barrier. The authority should also focus on building information centers where the community can get tourism-related information.
- It is a common phenomenon that tourism development will cause residents to have higher living costs. The community should be encouraged to use local products and support each

other's businesses to deal with this problem. Besides tourism, they should also focus on other livelihood options to reduce over-dependency on tourism.

- Community involvement in the decision-making process of CBT implementation is considered mandatory for the success of the CBT project. However, sadly, in Bandarban, the community is not involved much in significant decision-making. Local governments and NGOs should organize participatory workshops where the local community can actively participate in CBT development planning and decision-making processes.

## 7. Limitations of the Research

This research has limitations regarding the money, data availability, complexity of the CBT development and generalizability. As this is a sample survey conducted by the researcher without outside funding, the money factor was a considerable limitation to the researcher. The availability of reliable, comprehensive data regarding CBT development was limited, especially in the Bandarban region. CBT development is a complex phenomenon influenced by various unknown factors; the researcher could not identify all the potential factors. This study is specific to the Bandarban region, which cannot be generalizable to other regions with different cultural and socio-economic context.

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