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21
COMMUNITY READINESS TO GREEN TOURISM INITIATIVES IN LESS DEVELOPED PARKS
Lessons from communities around Saadani National Park

Agnes Sirima and Maria Mngulwi

21.1 Introduction and background
The emergence of tourism as a major industry is one of the most remarkable changes that have taken place in global economic activity in recent years (Sinclair, 1998). Tourism is the third largest and fastest-growing economic activity in the world (after oil and automobiles) (Batta, 2009). Receipts from tourism make an important contribution to the economies of developing countries, in terms of income, employment and balance of payments effects. Thus, many developing countries actively pursue tourism as a means for job creation, economic diversification and foreign currency earning (Furqan et al., 2010).

In most cases, tourism activities are associated with three major impacts: economic, socio-cultural and environmental. While all these impacts are significant for tourism growth, economic impacts play a dominant role in policymaking (Sinclair, 1998). Economic benefits that accompany tourism development are considered a remedy for many social and economic problems (Furqan et al., 2010). Thus, the little attention given to tourism impacts has led to the indiscriminate and unplanned growth of tourism infrastructure in many countries, and, as a result, several negative impacts have been observed in the form of social and environmental degradation. Due to enhanced awareness of the negative impact of tourism on the environment, a number of approaches for making tourism sustainable have been developed. This led to the emergence of special interest tourism such as green tourism and community-based tourism (CBT) (Erdogan & Tosun, 2009).

The concept of a ‘green’ product is one that is easier to use than to define. In loose terms, a product or service can be said to be green when it is beneficial to the producer and consumer without harming the environment. The difficulty starts when a company attempts to measure the negative effects of their activities on the environment. Even in cases where measurement seems possible, the next difficulty arises in agreeing on the criteria to be considered and the threshold levels of unacceptable effects (Alhilal, 2010; Furqan et al., 2010; Font & Tribe, 2001; Smallbone & Sutcliffe, 1996).
Green tourism is used to indicate environmentally friendly tourism (Smallbone & Sutcliffe, 1996). It is the type of tourism that encourages people to pursue tourism activities in a manner that will benefit them rather than harm the environment (Arwel, 1987). Green tourism creates opportunities for the wide spreading of tourism values and local responsibility. The green concept allows the tourism industry to improve its image and practices while continuing with a commercial profit strategy (Font & Buckley, 2001). If greening is used solely for image purposes, rather than an approach adopted in practice, the very landscape, culture and heritage that provides the initial attractions will disappear (Okech et al., 2012). First, green tourism is often used to tell customers that the holiday destination they are going to is beautiful and unspoilt; second, green tourism claims can be used to signal that tourism operations taking place in that area do not harm the environment (Font & Tribe, 2001).

Green tourism are underpinned by the principle of minimization of overall tourism impacts on environment, benefiting local communities and ensuring sustainability of tourism activities. As CBT advocates more or less these broad parameters it can be certainly termed a form of green tourism. CBT seeks achieving sustainable development so as to enable local communities to improve their living conditions without irreversibly damaging the environment (Ruiz-Ballestone, 2011). It emphasizes empowerment and ownership through participation of villagers in tourism activities, the sharing of tourism benefits amongst them and the conservation of natural and cultural environment, as well as social and economic development (Hiwasaki, 2006).

### 21.2 Community readiness for CBT

Members of the community as a group are the main actors in a CBT product, as the existence of the tourism activities is often initiated by a group of people willing to be involved and participate in the process and operation of tourism activities in their community. First, prior to setting up a CBT product/programme, community capacity building must be executed to ensure they have enough understanding, capability and motivation to develop a CBT product with sustainability in mind (Rasid et al., 2012). CBT operators need to be trained and guided on how the process of a CBT product operates until they can manage their programme well, independently (Bhuiyan et al., 2011). The training process and initiatives are usually organized by the government or the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) closely related to environmental conservation.

In addition, leadership and the commitment to achieving the goals of the CBT is among the critical factors for a CBT product as it needs the full commitment from the programme leader or coordinator as well as from the local community involved (Rasid et al., 2012). Leaders need to apply the appropriate leadership style so that followers can be more motivated and inspired to be involved and participate in CBT activities (Yunista et al., 2012). On the other hand, organizational management and commitment is crucial as the CBT success depends on the organization of the programme (Ibrahim & Rasid, 2009).

Along with the above criteria, community members’ direct involvement in any tourism development project can empower the community economically, socially and politically (Hussin & Kunjuraman, 2014). In addition, the active involvement and participation of residents in the tourism development process seem to be prerequisites for achieving the goal of sustainability, thereby improving the overall welfare in the community (Ertuna & Kirbas, 2012). In order to make a CBT project sustainable, community involvement needs to take
place. CBT requires commitment from a wide range of stakeholders, including from the government and public sector, as well as from the community (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Hence, all parties involved in this programme have to become participatory, responsive and transparent in order to ensure the sustainability of a CBT product.

While CBT is intended to empower people, the representations deployed in constituting the targeted 'communities', be they imagined or real, remain largely unexamined (Tosun, 2000). Although not often acknowledged, one of the reasons why CBT programmes are hindered in their success is because those organizing them ignore the problematic assumptions embedded within the community concept itself (Tosun, 2000). Thus, before the establishment of a CBT initiative, communities in the respective areas must be ready and willing to participate in this venture.

21.3 Community-based tourism model

Arnstein (1969) emphasised that citizen participation has to be accompanied by power redistribution. Arnstein introduced a ‘ladder of citizen participation’ to explain the necessary steps, categorised into three levels of gradual evolution: ‘non-participation’, ‘degrees of tokenism’ and ‘degrees of citizen power’ (Figure 21.1). Although several studies explain the importance of community participation in CBT, they always fail to identify the existing level of community participation. The ladder of citizen participation introduced by Arnstein, therefore, is used to pinpoint key levels of community participation so as to create awareness in all CBT practitioners. Gray (1985) emphasized that for communities to have capacity to take part in CBT they need resources, skills and power, but power is often held by the government or other stakeholders who do not regard local communities as equal

![Figure 21.1](image-url)
partners. On the other hand, Joppe (1996) mentions that local communities in most cases do not even know where to begin when it comes to participation. Thus, Arnstein’s participation ladder is useful for informing local communities about their rights, responsibilities and options in planning and making decisions. Moreover, the ladder gives communities full control and power for policy and management. Arnstein’s ladder is not only used to identify the current level of community participation, but also to define the steps required to promote greater involvement (Okazaki, 2008).

This chapter aims at assessing communities’ readiness for CBT at Saadani National Park. Specifically, it examines expected income-generating tourism activities, the benefits to be accrued from these activities and the main challenges in establishing CBT.

### 21.4 Research method

#### 21.4.1 Study area description

Saadani National Park is situated in the Pangani District (plus a minor strip in Handeni District), Tanga Region and in the Bagamoyo District, Pwani Region. The protected area encloses the former Saadani Game Reserve, which covers about 209 km², the former cattle ranches of Mkwaja (462 km²) and Razaba (about 200 km²) and the Zaraninge Forest Reserve (178 km²). The total size of the national park is 1062 km²; it was established in 2002 as the 13th national park in Tanzania. The national park is in the centre of the historically rich triangle of Bagamoyo, Pangani and Zanzibar (Baldus et al., 2001). The Saadani National Park is home to a veritable mix of both marine and mainland flora and fauna. Activities in Sadaani National Park include game drives, boat safaris and walking safaris accompanied by an armed ranger, historical tours to the old Saadani fishing village and cultural tours to the main ethnic tribes in the area. Unlike other national parks in Tanzania, tourists can combine a safari with a relaxing beach stay at Saadani National Park.

#### 21.4.2 Data collection

Six villages were included in the study; Saadani, Matipwili, Gongo, Mkwaja, Mkange and Buyuni. Data were collected in phases between April and June 2016. The first phase involved consultative meetings with environment and conservation committee members in each of the six villages. The aim of the consultative meetings was to familiarize the team with community members, to generate individual community experience and ideas regarding CBT, to discuss in detail their ambitions to include tourism as one of the alternative income sources, to carry out community resource mapping and to conduct self-assessment regarding the readiness to embark on tourism initiatives in their respective villages. A total of 55 individuals from six villages — (Mkange [n=11], Mkwaja [n=8], Saadani [n=7], Matiwili [n=9], Gongo [n=10] and Buyuni [n=10]) attended consultative meetings held in April 2016. The second phase involved a focus group discussion conducted in May. Focus group discussants include two representatives from each village. A total of 12 participants, 2 from each village, participated in the discussion. The aim of the focus group discussion was to allow members to share their views regarding tourism attractions in their villages, provide members opportunities to collaborate in case of overlapping/shared attractions across villages and to provide a learning opportunity for committee members concerning the principles of and requirements for successful CBT. Members who got an opportunity to participate in the focus group discussion held a feedback meeting with other committee members in their respective
village. The third phase involved visiting the committees in their respective villages to further assess their readiness and the level of participation of other members within the village. In each village, a consultative meeting was held. The aim of these meetings was to provide feedback and consolidate learning among all committee members in each of the villages from the previous learning opportunities shared with other members. A total 59 individuals from six villages (Mkange [n=11], Mkwaja [n=9], Saadani [n=9], Matipwili [n=10], Gongo [n=10] and Buyuni [n=10]) attended the meetings. The meetings were conducted in June 2016.

21.4.3 Data analysis

Data were transcribed and analyzed using Excel spreadsheets for familiarity and topic generation. Discussion issues used during consultative meetings and the focus group discussion guided the generation of topics. Interpretation was done on the topics to develop themes and relationship patterns. Major themes developed included: the level of acceptance of CBT initiatives, overlapping attraction, funding constraints, high level of expectations, green tourism initiatives as a strategy to strengthen relation with park officials and the need for technical support.

21.5 Strength of the communities that support establishment of community-based tourism initiatives

21.5.1 Level of acceptance of CBT initiatives

Results generally showed high level of acceptance and enthusiasm among community members. From a series of meeting and discussions with local communities, the majority showed a high level of acceptance and readiness to start small-scale sustainable tourism initiatives. They were willing to devote their time and resources with the expectation of receiving tourism benefits. The positive image that the majority had about tourism stemmed from the possibility of earning extra income and the preservation of coastal heritage and culture.

21.5.2 Presence of tourist attraction

Participants understood the tourism potential of their areas specifically by being close to the national park, presence of the beach in some villages, heritage and the cultural lifestyle of the residents. The villages have a number of attraction such as historical caves, natural springs, and ritual areas to mention a few. Most of these overlap across villages. For tourism to be viable, collaboration across villages is needed. However, communities showed some hesitation when it comes to having joint tourism programme among the six villages. This poses management challenges, especially in regard to the practicality of running several tourism ventures with related attractions in close proximity. Villages like Saadani with various heritage attractions stand a greater chance of attracting larger numbers of tourists. Also, Saadani village is located at the entrance of the park, making it easy draw more tourists.

21.5.3 Tourism as a strategy to strengthen relation with park officials

Despite the existence of community conservation services (CCS) for villages around Saadani National Park, community relationship with the national park has not been easy.
Communities see tourism ventures as an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with park management, especially in areas where park-community relations have been difficult.

### 21.5.4 Tourism as an alternate livelihood source

The majority viewed tourism business as opportunity to earn extra income. The main, traditional economic activity in the area is fishing. CBT represents an important livelihood alternative that is compatible with the conservation mandate of the park and that can contribute to building more cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships between the park and the surrounding communities. Participants found the data collection and sharing process very useful as a way to learn from successful examples elsewhere. They also used the opportunity to share their own ideas and get feedback from others with very different experiences. Communities have been interested in finding income generating opportunities related to park visitors in their villages and these discussions provided them with many ideas and examples to take back to the deliberations in their own villages. Critical in the discussion was their better appreciation for the principles of successful CBT enterprises. However, ensuring that all members understood and would strive to address these principles in the implementation of local enterprises will be a big challenge.

### 21.6 Threats and challenges

#### 21.6.1 Funding constraints

Despite being ready for tourism, the majority are not aware of what it takes to run a tourism business and are not willing to invest financial resources for its take-off. The community expects immediate support from the park, specifically on marketing. It was also not clear among many community members how funding of these initiatives is going to be realized and managed. There is also a need for technical support to make tourism activities possible in the area.

#### 21.6.2 High level of expectations

There are high expectations of quick, direct individual benefits from tourism ventures. However, tourism benefits take time to be realised and often only directly benefit a few individuals. Communities expect to receive tourism dollars when they see tourists on their trails or attractions. This shows that a majority are not aware of the tourism business model as well as nature of benefits generated by tourism business.

#### 21.6.3 Lack of tourism facilities

Most of the areas are very remote, making it difficult to attract tourism dollars. Tourist facilities are lacking in most areas, except at Mkwaja and Saadani village where some tourist facilities such as hotels are located. Some of the villages do not have all-weather roads, making them inaccessible during rainy season. Substantial tourism investment is needed if the venture is to take off.

#### 21.6.3 Nature of the community

Individualism persists amongst the majority. Villages are not willing to collaborate, especially those located in close proximity or those that share similar/related attractions. The
unwillingness comes from the need for each village to control its own income that is going to be generated from tourism activities. The nature of the coastal community also influences the way communities view tourism. Communities rely heavily on fishing, which has been a main source of livelihood for many generations. Fishing is also part of the coastal/Swahili culture. Switching to other income-generating activities that require active involvement of one’s time and money has been received with hesitation, especially in the older generation.

21.7 Are the communities ready?

Developing a community-level plan for tourism enterprises was recognized as critical to guiding the effective prioritization and implementation of activities. However, planning should not substitute more specific action and participants felt that identifying and implementing one leading example could be a stimulus for further community developments. Planning did encompass other activities that were considered extremely important, including discussing the ideas generated at the workshops with their committees and communities to ensure a broad-based buy-in and ownership of the initiative by the community at large.

Participants recognized that embarking on a CBT activity is not something they can undertake themselves. Rather it must be a collaborative effort that involves some other key partners. First, they felt the discussions in the communities needed to ensure that village councils be actively engaged in tourism planning and development, although they expressed a caution that such engagement should not take on political characteristics. A second partnership that needs to be cultivated is with the private sector and potential investors such as existing tourism operators. The third partnership involves collaboration with the national park. Participants recognized that the marketing of local attractions should most effectively be linked to the established visibility of the national park, which has the potential to add significantly to any community-based enterprise success.

Finally there is a need to place significant effort into raising start-up capital. Specific actions in this regard were not identified but this should be discussed at the village level in establishing individual CBT plans.

21.8 Conclusion

Members involved in the process have been active in developing a better understanding of conservation approaches and management actions that impact their livelihood activities, thereby affecting the relationship they have with Saadani National Park management. Tourism has been one aspect of this process. However, the feedback-sharing workshops provided a focus on CBT that allowed a more detailed investigation of ideas and actions on how to run successful community tourism. Participants appreciated the opportunity to identify and map tourism resources specific to their communities. This activity reinforced the value of the specific community resources for tourism that each community has and participants were anxious to have others, both in their villages and among other stakeholders, recognize these values and support their development. Communities were especially appreciative of the opportunity to learn more about the principles involved in successful CBT enterprises and to see how such principles had been applied in other examples. Learning from the experience of others is very important, especially where the participants can appreciate and understand the natural and cultural context. Thus the relevant examples discussed were most helpful.

For CBT ventures to be sustainable, it is necessary to manage goals and the expectations of the communities to make sure that all members take-off with similar projections and
anticipations. Sensitization is needed to ensure that the community understands the need to collaborate with the like-minded. Multiple stakeholders are needed to support such initiatives if their long-term sustainability is to be guaranteed. For a start, there is a need to liaise with the park management to provide technical support to the communities. Specific CBT plans for each community need to be developed.

The tourism sector is a major contributor to socio-economic development in the national, regional and rural areas. The evolution of CBT has been used as a strategic tool for poverty alleviation. The most important aspect is to make sure that it is done in conjunction with the local community’s participation. The communities have to be aware of how they can benefit from this venture and through their involvement in tourism planning and development; as has been pointed out by Salazar (2012), local-level participation is essential for achieving the global goal of sustainable development. However, such involvement often involves a shift of power from local authorities to local actors. Thus, actors in CBT should be willing to devolve power to the local communities for it to be successful and sustainable.

References


