

A pre-condition evaluation and management model for community-based tourism

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Abstract

Tourism is often regarded as a vehicle for the economic development of disadvantaged rural communities. Although the concept is good in principle, the successful implementation of community-based tourism projects has proved to be problematic. This article focuses on the pre-conditions required for the successful implementation of community based tourism development projects. A list of pre-conditions extracted from a literature study (the research design) is compiled and subsequently field-tested on existing CBT projects in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A CBT pre-conditions model is subsequently proposed and an implementation strategy suggested.

Keywords: Community –Based tourism, community development, pre-condition and management model, tourism, South Africa.

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Introduction

Tourism is globally one of the largest employers and it can be a most viable and sustainable economic development option (UNWTO, 2013). Tourism also offers economic development alternatives to some impoverished regions of the world, especially those blessed with rich cultural and natural assets, offering tourists a variety of reasons to visit these impoverished regions (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). Nevertheless, different view-points are present, for example, Sehevens (2002:9) argues that the use of tourism to promote community development is a good concept in principle, but fraught with difficulties in practice. Pleumaron (2002) also warns of the dangers of not considering precautionary measures before drawing communities into new schemes, explaining that quick-fix measures often fail, leaving local people in jeopardy while project managers move on elsewhere.

There has been a proliferation of reasons globally for adopting tourism as a vehicle for economic development and job creation. Within tourism the main reason for introducing Community Based Tourism(CBT) is based on an alternative approach to mass tourism (López-Guzmán, Sanchez-Langares & Paven, 2011; Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2012; Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Tolkach, King & Pearlman, 2013) and the need for tourism to contribute more to community development by, for example, improving the livelihoods of the poor (Lapeyre, 2010; Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013), and generating economic, social, and cultural benefits within a community (Johnson, 2010). CBT is seen as a possible positive way of tourism development since it can have positive effects on societies, especially when it is successfully used as a tool for beneficial development and achieving socio-community empowerment. This can be achieved, for example, through community-based tourism projects' (Dolezal & Burns, 2015). CBT involves active participation of the local community (López-Guzmán et al., 2011), and is also seen as a tool for development (Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007; Honggang, Sofield & Jigany, 2009; Zapata, Hall, Lindo & Vanderschaegle, 2011).

Methodology

The aim of the study is two-fold, firstly, a number of pre-conditions in CBT were extrapolated from the literature and categorized in themes and listed, and secondly, as a major section of the article, a model on CBT preconditions (named CBT Pre-condition Evaluation and Management Model) is proposed and explained based on field work conducted in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The model can be used with the pre-condition-themes proposed, or with other pre-conditions based on the local context. Before developing CBT, certain principles, such as recognition, support and promotion of community ownership of tourism and cross-cultural learning, needs to be considered (Suansri, 2003). Thus, the analysis of preconditions is relevant because '... (I)t is important to avoid spending time pursuing ecotourism and raising expectations in circumstances which are highly likely to lead to failure. An initial feasibility assessment should be made before instigating a community-based strategy' (Denman, 2001).

Literature review and research design

Community-based tourism (CBT) was introduced as an alternative approach to mass tourism (López-Guzmán et al., 2011; Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2012; Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Tolkach et al., 2013). This alternative approach was also as a consequence of repatriation of profits of developing economies by multinational companies and the negative impact of this on these destinations (Lucchetti & Font, 2013). There was also the need for tourism to contribute more to community development by, for example, improving the livelihoods of the poor (Lapeyre, 2010; Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013; Tolkach et al., 2013), and to

generate economic, social, and cultural benefits within a community (Yaman & Mohd, 2004; Johnson, 2010) as a means to empower poor communities to take control of their land and resources (Mearns, 2003). Further considerations include active participation of the local community (López-Guzmán et al., 2011) as a tool for development (Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007; Honggang et al., 2009; Zapata et al., 2011), where CBT is seen as a more 'grass-roots' and sustainable form of tourism compared to mass tourism, and it can serve to empower people, promote self-esteem, and facilitate the development of a more equitable society (Kayat, Ramli, Mat-Kasim & Abdul-Razak, 2015; Mtampuri & Giampiccoli, 2013).

It has been advanced that '... (B) efore pursuing community-based ecotourism the suitability of the local area should be checked and fundamental preconditions met' (Denman, 2001; Hayle, 2013). The local community should not be given unrealistic expectations that '...(I)t is important to ascertain at the outset, before raising expectations in the community regarding potential benefits to be derived from tourism, whether conditions in that area are conducive to tourism' (Hayle, 2013). These preconditions can be local and national in character (Calanog, Reyes & Eugene, 2012; Denman, 2001). At the same time '...meeting these pre-conditions does not guarantee success...' but it helps in the implementation of the CBT project (Calanog et al., 2012). Or differently stated '... (I)f not properly devised and implemented, CBT is highly likely to fail' George, Nedelea & Antony, 2007). In this context the literature lists various pre-conditions as shown in Table 1.

Table 1:Pre-condition evaluation

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attractiveness of ecotourism resources;• Accessibility to the resources;• Positive behaviour of local community towards tourists and tourism activities;• Community's tourism capability to supply basic tourism services (i.e. accommodation, food and beverage, transportation), and• (Potential) demand in tourist market, and a sustainable management (Hoa, Huan & Haron, 2010).• Acquisition of knowledge and skills;• Well-grounded management and governance structure;• Sharing of profits and re-investing these with the community;• Stimulating an entrepreneurial culture within community members, and• Government policy on tourism (Waruhiu, 2010).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existence of a market for the project's tourism product;• Generation of income and employment opportunities;• Transfer of management responsibilities from government to the community;• Institutional embedding;• Scale of the project appropriate to the capabilities and human resources within the community;• Involvement of an organisation as a partner in project development and commitment to provide continued support, and• Protection of the natural environment (Fryman, 2001).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for empowerment of local authorities;• Increased and equal access to (market) information;• Establishment of legal structures;• Community participation, and

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- Strengthening local institutions as a fifth necessary condition (Isaac & Van der Sterren, 2004).
 - Economic and political frameworks that facilitate trade and investment;
 - International protocols and standards related to tourism and the environment;
 - Development Orders and Parish Council regulations that govern physical plans and related issues;
 - A reasonable level of ownership of the projects at the local level;
 - Adequate physical infrastructure, access to health and housing, safety and security factors;
 - Schools, water quality, sewage and the ratio of visitors to residents;
 - Reasonable access to communications;
 - Interesting landscapes, flora, fauna that have the potential to attract specialists and/or the public in general;
 - High levels of community awareness of and appreciation for opportunities, risks and challenges associated with tourism and an interest in receiving visitors;
 - Ecosystems that can withstand increased levels of stress;
 - Structures that foster effective communication within the community and between the community and relevant government entities related to the project;
 - The potential to enhance the lifestyles and character of indigenous people, e.g., the Maroons;
 - A market assessment of the potential of the project, reviewing all elements of the marketing mix, and
 - An understanding that each set of pre-conditions is unique to the specific project and community (Hayle (2013)).
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- At the national/municipal level**
- An economic, political and legislative framework must be in place to ensure effective trading and security of investment;
 - National legislation on protecting local ownership of ecotourism projects must be present, thus allowing financial benefits from ecotourism be earned and retained within local communities;
 - Local ownership rights on natural and cultural resource bases must be properly observed;
 - Visitors' safety and security, as well as that of the local people, should be assured;
 - The community must have unique natural features and attractive scenery, with the presence of endemic plants and animals;
 - The ecosystem must be able to resist or adapt to varying levels of visitation stress;
 - The local community should be fully interested and aware of the opportunities and risks involved in ecotourism;
 - The presence of a community organisation is necessary to ensure effective decision making;
 - The respect and protection measures must be aligned with local indigenous systems and values, and
 - The community must provide an avenue for marketing ecotourism activities/enterprises in partnership with other stakeholders in the value chain (Calanog et al., 2012).
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- An economic and political framework that does not prevent effective trading and security of investment;
 - National legislation that does not obstruct tourism income being earned by and retained within local communities;
 - A sufficient level of ownership rights within the local community;
 - High levels of safety and security for visitors (both in terms of image of the country/region and in reality);
 - Relatively low health risks and access to basic medical services and a clean water supply, and a practicable means of physical access and telecommunication to the area;
 - Landscapes or flora/fauna that have inherent attractiveness or degree of interest to appeal either to specialists or more general visitors;
 - Ecosystems able to absorb a managed level of visitation without damage;
 - A local community that is aware of the potential opportunities, risks and challenges involved, and is interested in receiving visitors;
 - Existing or potential structures for effective community decision making;
 - No obvious threats to indigenous culture and traditions, and
 - An initial market assessment suggesting a potential demand and an effective means of accessing it, and that the area is not over supplied with ecotourism offers (Denman, 2001).
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The analysis of Table 1 allows us to put together the various pre-conditions in a number of themes or categories of preconditions. These themes are listed and supported with literature as follows:

- Infrastructure (Messer & Vitcenda, 2010; Lukhele & Mearns, 2013);
- Physical/natural and cultural tourism assets (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012; Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Tuffin, 2005);
- Market access and marketing (Forstner, 2004; Mitchell & Muckosy, 2008; Calanog et al., 2012; Lucchetti & Font, 2013);
- Product development (Ashley, Roe & Goodwin, 2001:40; Lukhele & Mearns, 2013; Lucchetti & Font, 2013);
- Profitability individual/ communal (Lukhele & Mearns, 2013);
- Decision-making structures (Sproule, 1996; Naguran, 1999);
- Community capabilities (Aref, Redzuan & Gill, 2010; Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Suansri, 2003);
- Financial resources (Aref et al., 2010; Calanog et al., 2012; Asker, Boronyak, Carrard & Paddon, 2010);
- Community leader/initiator(Calanog et al., 2012; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Aref et al., 2010);
- Community interest in tourism (Calanog et al., 2012; Johnson, 2010; Tuffin, 2005; Mitchell & Eagles, 2001);
- Local leadership/ government (Simpson, 2008; Isaac & Van der Sterren, 2004), and
- Threats to physical environment and culture (Calanog et al., 2012; Denman, 2001).

It is important that theseproposed pre-condition themes be properly evaluated to manage and enhance the chances of success of CBT projects. The pre-conditions in this study are extrapolated from the literature.However their application elsewhere will vary and depend on the specific context of the project area. In the case of the latter, certain pre-conditions may apply and others may not be necessary. A model therefore can accommodate any possible precondition, and it proposes a method of evaluation and management of any recognized precondition.

A CBT Pre-Condition Evaluation and Management Model (PEM)

The community should be the main actor in the evaluation and management of preconditions, in fact ‘....(B)efore formulating a vision the community needs to evaluate the situation inside and outside the community by analysingits strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Analysing these factors will help the community understand how these factors influence the actions of the community and lead to results’ (Suansri, 2003). Thus the analysis of preconditions is relevant because ‘....(I)t is important to avoid spending time

pursuing ecotourism and raising expectations in circumstances which are highly likely to lead to failure. An initial feasibility assessment should be made before instigating a community-based strategy' (Denman, 2001). Therefore, it is fundamental to keep in mind from the outset of applying this proposed model that, while external actors can (and usually) are necessary as facilitators, the community should be the main actors in the PEM.

The facilitation/guidance should follow a bottom-up approach where the relationship of all parties involved must be balanced and dominance should be avoided. In this direction a planning committee, including all the key actors should be proposed as an entity to be in charge of the PEM process. The PEM model is also based on the following premises:

- That all pre-conditions linked to the CBT project must be identified jointly and agreed upon by the local project members and external facilitators.
- That each pre-condition needs to be evaluated individually to determine whether it is an opportunity or a challenge.
- That improving the possible challenges using inventive solutions would ameliorate the challenge to become an opportunity, and
- That the evaluation process should be repeated to ensure that all identified challenges and opportunities are strong enough to enhance the project's success.

All pre-conditions should be understood as linked together, as displayed in Figure 1, to a central pre-condition CBT project hub, similar to a bicycle wheel, with spokes attached between the hub and the rim.

A wheel operates optimally if all the spokes linked to the hub are in good working condition. A damaged spoke will cause the wheel to malfunction. In the same way, if all the pre-conditions that are linked to a project function well, this will allow the project to improve and increase its chances of success.

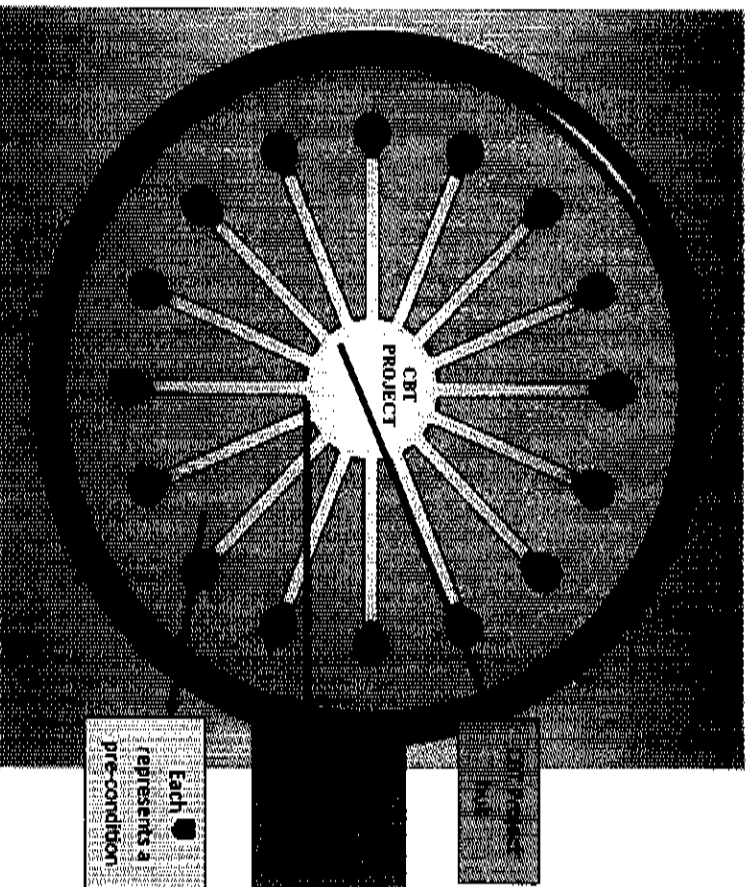


Figure 1: CBT-linked pre-conditions.

The 'wheels' of pre-conditions at the same time must to be seen as the starting point of the more comprehensive PEM (see Figure 2). The PEM proposes the following steps:

- 1: Identify all pre-conditions linked to the project;
- 2: Evaluate each pre-condition individually;
- 3: Check for threats (challenges) or opportunities;
- 4: Address challenges and develop opportunities;
- 5: Convert challenges into opportunities;
- 6: Develop opportunities: identify objectives;
- 7: Develop strategies and action plans to reach goals; and
- 8: Enhance chances of CBT project success.

The **first step** is a 'pre' requirement and serves to identify all the CBT pre-conditions that are linked to the project before implementation. This is shown as step 1 in the PEM model in Figure 2 and is illustrated in the Pre-Condition Wheel in Figure 1 (as explained and illustrated above), and listed in Table 2.

The **second step** requires the facilitator and project members to determine whether each pre-condition is either a challenge or an opportunity (or both) within the CBT project. This is shown as step 2 in the PEM model and is linked

to B and C of the Pre-condition Assessment Tool (PART: Table 2). The next step (step 3) will require the committee to separate individual pre-conditions identified as either a challenge or an opportunity. Thus, depending on the outcome of step 2, as shown in B and C (Table 2), it will be decided which pre-conditions are either a challenge or an opportunity. The challenges could be a threat to the project and will need addressing, and also require more time and resources while an opportunity could be further developed, and probably requires less time and resources.

This exercise is linked to steps 2 and 3 of the PEM model, while (step 4) requires the planning committee to rate and rank each pre-condition, and is linked to D and E of the pre-condition assessment resource tool as depicted in Table 1. The ratings and rankings should lead to critical evaluations of each pre-condition. For example, individual pre-conditions identified as challenges could either be rated poor, inadequate, or need improvement, while opportunities could be rated as either excellent, good, fair or satisfactory (D and E in Table 2) of the PART, while rankings will be based in order of priority (E in Table 2).

The pre-conditions that are ranked as a high priority should be followed with a short report to show the factors that influenced their rating, as this exercise could reveal vital information that could be used to address challenges, as suggested in step 5 to develop opportunities and in step 6 to convert challenges into opportunities, as required by the PEM model.

The next exercise (step 5) is to convert challenges into opportunities. The information gathered from the brief reports on each rated and ranked item (D and E in Table 2) should provide indicators to convert challenges into opportunities. Indicators are tools used to measure and identify key types of information that can be used to guide tourism management decisions (Messer & Vitcenda, 2010).

An indicator, for example, in relation to infrastructure could be a tarred or gravel road. The project members will need to assess the situation and find a solution, depending on the indicators which need to be identified for each pre-condition, keeping in mind the project goals and objectives.

The project members and facilitators should agree on possible solutions and take actions to convert challenges into opportunities. This step must be undertaken within agreed time frames. In Step 6 objectives need to be identified; these objectives should be developed into action plans.

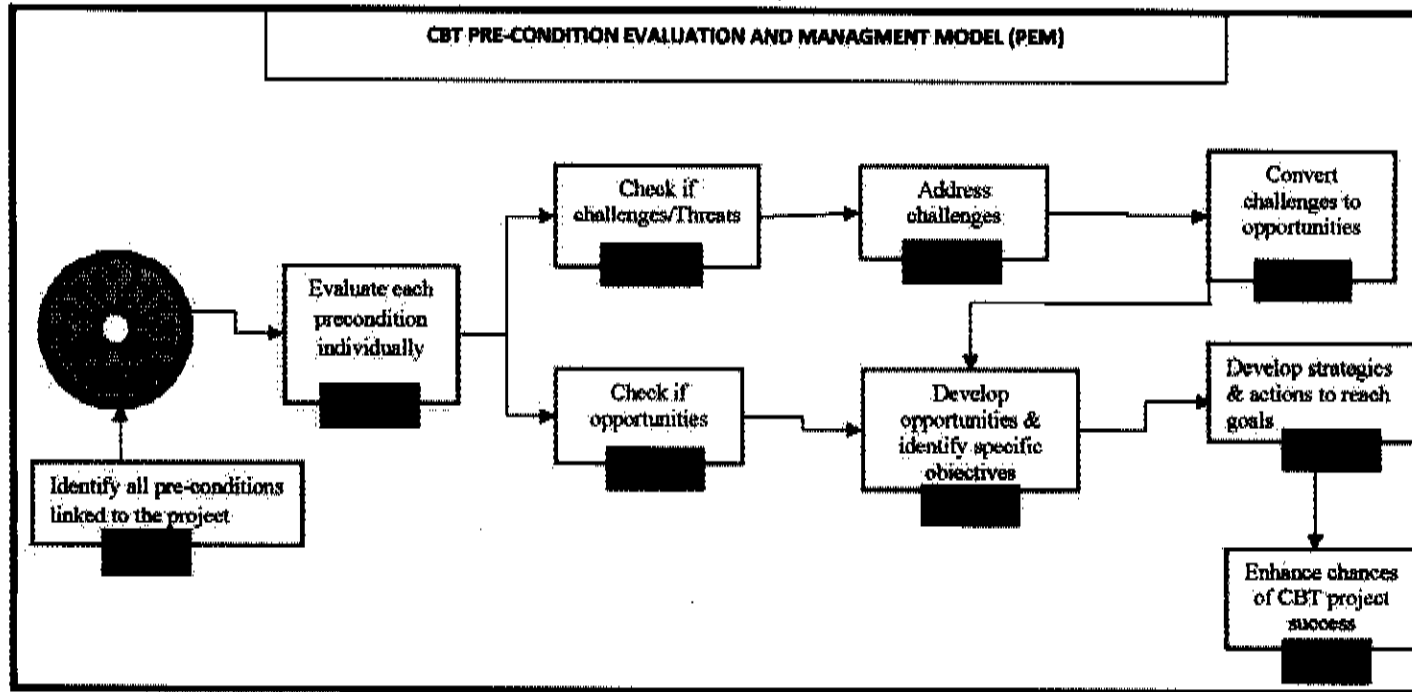


Figure 2: CBT Pre-Condition Evaluation and Management Model (PEM).

Steps 1 to 8 of the PEM model are linked to the pre-condition assessment resource tool (PART) in Table 2. Both the PEM model and PART complement each other. The PEM model provides a methodological or guiding framework, while the PART allows the planning committee to capture their outputs and also encourages future thinking.

In this stage (step 7), the planning committee (community members and facilitators) create an action plan based on the outputs from the preceding steps. This process is essential to determine whether goals are being met and whether other interventions may be necessary. Monitoring and evaluation should be implemented as part of the action plan, as it is a cyclical process, and should be repeated. Therefore the planning committee should continuously plan, act, review and improve their CBT project. At the end of the time frame, the facilitators and project members should re-evaluate the indicators to decide whether alternative strategies are necessary. If some of the pre-conditions are still identified as challenges, then the project members and facilitators will repeat the improvement cycle; until the pre-condition is improved to an acceptable level for the proposed CBT project, as illustrated in Figure 3.

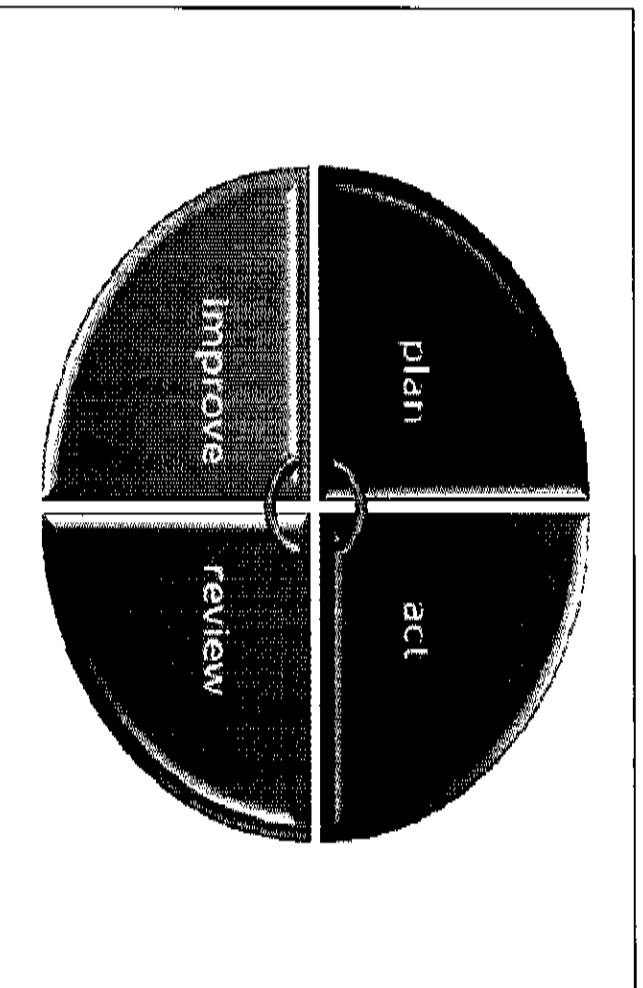


Figure 3: Cyclic process

Step 8 happens after the cycle process (step 7, Figure 3) and requires that challenges (threats) that have been mitigated but are still a challenge, or if they have been mitigated, to become opportunities (strengths). It is important that each pre-condition reaches an acceptable level so that the project can progress towards its specifically proposed goals. In cases where resources and capabilities

do not allow the project to reach the ideal pre-condition level, then alternative strategies need to be implemented to make the project feasible, for example, if there is currently no reticulated water supply project members could look at borehole construction or tanks for water storage.

Table 2 schematically proposes the 'practical' application of the PEM and PART. The Pre-Condition Assessment Resource Tool (PART) is an instrument that is designed to complement the PEM model. The PART has three main features: it acts as an inventory that allows for the charting of all identified pre-conditions, it allows for the charting of opportunities and challenges, and it allows for specific rating and ranking of the pre-conditions that require priority in terms of development as shown in the completed example (in Table 2). The PART assists the planning committee to make more informed decisions.

Table 2 (A) shows a list of CBT pre-conditions extrapolated from the literature consulted in the study. The outputs of the assessed pre-conditions should assist in identifying possible challenges and opportunities and provide directions for corrective actions before embarking on a CBT project; for example, Table 2(B, C and D), shows possible outputs that may unfold from an assessment, linked to steps 2 and 3 of the PEM model. The assessment of the pre-conditions could reveal whether challenges are either poor, inadequate, or need development, while opportunities could show whether they are excellent, good, fair or satisfactory and could be developed. The assessment chart also requires pre-conditions to be rated and ranked (Table 2, D and E) and is linked to steps 4, 5 and 6 of the PEM model. All pre-conditions are not equally important, therefore the pre-conditions identified as critically important, for example infrastructure, markets for the product, need for a skilled project manager, government support, capacity, and financial resources, needs to be a high priority. This exercise is essential and highlights challenges that need to be addressed and opportunities that need to be developed in order of priority, and should be critically examined. As previously mentioned, the final steps require the development of strategies and action plans, and monitoring and evaluation of the recommended goals and objectives, to enhance the success of the project (F in Table 2) and are linked to steps 7 and 8 of the PEM model. Although pre-conditions should be mandatory for all CBT projects, the type of pre-conditions could vary, depending on the specific context and circumstances of the project area and its project members. For example, infrastructure, financial resources and skills levels may be a pre-condition that needs high priority in terms of development in rural areas in Local Development Communities, while the same pre-conditions may probably not be a priority in developed countries.

Table 2: Pre-Condition Assessment Resource Tool (PART).

Application to Hypothetical CBT Project						Development Priority List					Action Plans	
A	B	C						F				
CBT Pre-Conditions			Opportunity		Challenge							
							1	2	3	4	5	
							Not a priority					
							Low priority					
							Medium priority					
							Moderate priority					
							High priority					
Availability of infrastructure	Excellent	Priority not exists										
Presence of physical/technical resources	Excellent		X									
Presence of cultural resources	Excellent		X									
Existence of market for product		No established market									X	
Knowledge of a market demand		Needs improvement									X	
Availability of skilled labour		Needs improvement									X	
Availability of financial resources		Inadequate									X	
* Support from traditional leader		Inadequate									X	
A viability of skilled project leader/manager	D	Inadequate									X	
Community interest in tourism	Good		X									
Evidence of decision-making structure	Good		X									
Government involvement in tourism		None/None									X	
No possible threats to physical environment	Fair			X								
No possible threats to local culture									X			
Profitability (and value)											X	
Profitability (communal)	Satisfactory										X	
		Needs improvement										
Develop action plans/monitor & evaluate pre-conditions for CBT												

1 means *not a priority*, 2 means *low priority*, 3 means *medium priority*, 4 means *moderate priority*, 5 means *high priority*. This scale shows the development priority, following the outcomes of the identified pre-conditions before proceeding with implementation of the project

A to F are linked to the eight steps of the PEM model. This link shows the synergy of the PEM model and the Pre-Condition Assessment Resources Tool (PART). As explained previously, they complement each other. If the steps of the PEM model are followed, the outputs could be charted as illustrated in the example (Table 2).

* Only applicable in Africa and in similar traditional societies.

Conclusion

Tourism and CBT in particular are used as development tools. However in CBT there is a lack of a model on how to manage pre-conditions that can be valuable to the success of CBT projects. This desk study extrapolated and listed a number of pre-conditions for CBT development from the literature and proposes a model for pre-condition management, denominated PEM and PART. The models can be used with the pre-condition-themes proposed, or with other pre-conditions, based on the local context.

It is argued that a model for the evaluation and management of pre-conditions is fundamental, because only with a proper foundation can CBT development increase its chances of success. As a building needs a proper and solid foundation to remain sturdy and undamaged, the same applies to a CBT which needs proper evaluation and management of pre-conditions (as a foundation of the project) to increase the chance and level of success, and remain sustainable. The level and type of collaborative approach between CBT project members and external facilitators is important, as this relationship should always recognize that the owners, managers and beneficiaries of the CBT project are the local members. Therefore collaboration should lead to long-term sustainability of the projects, also when the facilitators leave the scene of the project. The CBT (PEM) model assist in clarifying the viability of the project at the outset of the planning phase, while the PART complements the application of the model. The application of the model is universal and is similar to a SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, allowing the stakeholders to conduct a feasibility study based on the indicators that are developed for each pre-condition presented as a challenge.

The CBT (PEM) model is relevant for the following reasons:

- It can reduce failure as the model provides a framework for planning before practical implementation of the project.
- It encourages stakeholders to find solutions through early detection of possible problems.
- It promotes future planning and thinking.
- It strengthens the foundation of a project.
- It allows the stakeholders (community and external facilitators) to identify the pre-conditions for their CBT project in advance as this depends on specific local context and,
- It promotes community-based planning, involving local communities with the assistance of external facilitators.

It is assumed that this model, which recommends the evaluation and management of pre-conditions before practical implementation, will present important information that will possibly enhance the success of the CBT project, thus achieving more positive outcomes. However, projects that are already operating, can still make use of the model. Finally, the PEM Model developed in this study can be applied in different places with minor modifications. The pre-conditions identified from the literature also have universal applications, and can be applied as required in relation to the context of the project area. Thus, the general concept of identifying and evaluating pre-conditions should be mandatory to any CBT project to enhance the chance of success of the project itself. The rationale for the model is based on the need to save time and funds, and possibly reduce failure and increase the chance of success of CBT projects. Therefore, it is recommended that pre-conditions should be met prior to implementation.

The application of both the PEM model and PART, however, require a range of technical, business and project management skills, such as the ability to conduct proper feasibility studies and business plans, which may not be readily available in rural areas. The inability to source such skills locally could be a weakness of the proposed model that planners should be aware of.

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