

# Community-based tourism and food: towards a relationship framework

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## Abstract

Tourism is currently a growing sector of the economy and its possible relevance in community development is acknowledged. Within tourism CBT has been advanced to counteract negative effects of mass tourism and as a strategy to facilitate disadvantaged community development. Food tourism is also on a growing trend. Literature related to food and catering in CBT is present however, a general framework of relationships between CBT development and food seems absent. Based on the relevance of these tourism forms this article, which is based on extant literature, aims to propose a relationship framework between CBT and food. The article advances that it is important to understand the various aspects of the relationship between CBT and food to enhance the chance of growing (scaling-up) CBT entities through the combined community-based food tourism (CBFT). Thus various issues relevant to this framework are mentioned such as matters related to food as a tourist attraction, to food production and selling, to food standards in CBT. Whilst not pretending to be fully comprehensive, the article advances the need to comprehend food in CBT from various angles.

**Keywords:** tourism; community-based tourism; food; community development

## Introduction

Tourism is today an important sector in the global economy and its value continues to grow. For instance, the World Tourism organisation (UNWTO) proposes that “International tourism receipts increased by US\$ 48 billion in 2014 to reach a record US\$ 1,245 billion” (UNWTO, 2015). The tourism figures in the international exports trade also show the relevance of the tourism sector, especially in a number of developing countries as international tourism is “30% of the world’s exports of services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services” and it ranks as a first export in various developing countries (UNWTO, 2015; see also OECD/UNWTO/WTO, 2013:9). In this context, tourism can play a relevant role in development in developing countries (see OECD/UNWTO/WTO, 2013:19). In addition the tourism sector’s services such as accommodation, food services and transportation can offer employment opportunities in many developing countries (Christian, Fernandez-Stark, Ahmed & Gereffi, and 2011:6).

However, the role and potential of tourism in development and poverty reduction in developing countries is debated (see for example Saayman, Rossouw & Krugell, 2012) and some authors (Kayat, Ramli, Mat-Kasim & Abdul-Razak, 2015:223) argue that while tourism can deliver an array of benefits “mere statistics reflecting the growth of income and wealth spurred by tourism is not enough to qualify tourism as an important contributor to the development of a host community.” As such focusing tourism development merely on numerical matters representing the basic principle of the notion of growth “can actually lead to destruction.” Therefore other issues such as local capacity should be kept in consideration (Kayat, Ramli, Mat-Kasim & Abdul-Razak, 2015:223). However, despite various and well-known tourism negative impacts and costs, “tourism can, under certain constraints, still represent a viable option for development” (Cini & Saayman, 2013:664). Thus, tourism should not be seen in a negative light *per se* but its relevance in terms of implementation, development approach and management should be considered favourably

Out of the need to improve the positive tourism impacts on host community, alternative tourism development emerged to contrast more conventional mass tourism. As such CBT emerged as an alternative form in tourism development intended to counteract mass tourism and is seen as a possible option in developing countries (Mearns & Lukhele, 2015:2). CBT has increased markedly “in terms of tourism development and scholarly works in this area” (Yoopetch, 2014:7).

Within the general trend of tourism growth the sector of food tourism, “as a form of niche or alternative tourism” (du Rand & Heath, 2006:207) has also grown considerably so much so that it has been proposed that: “It is a growing market. The growth of food tourism worldwide is an obvious fact. It is one of the most dynamic segments within the tourism market” (Gaztelumendi, 2012:10). It is therefore not a coincidence that the UNWTO has published a volume of the Affiliates Members series with the title ‘*Global Report on Food Tourism*’ and in its introduction mentions that “In recent years, Food Tourism has grown considerably and has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism” (UNWTO Affiliate Members Programme, 2012:5). In line with this trend food tourism research has also increased, for example, the important “implications of tourist food consumption on destinations have received a growing research interest recently” (Mak, Lumbers & Eves, 2012:172; see also du Rand & Heath, 2006:211). At the same time other suggestions mention that “Current research in gastronomic tourism is scarce and is mainly focused on wine...” (Fandos Herrera, Blanco Herranz & Puyuelo Arilla, 2012:6). Research related to food and catering in CBT are present (see Giampiccoli & Hayward Kalis, 2012; Boonzaaier, 2009; Boonzaaier & Philip, 2007), however, a study that is directed towards the development of a general framework of relationships between CBT development and food seems absent.

This article aims to contribute to fill this gap. Therefore the aim of this article is to investigate the various aspects that link CBT with food to be able to propose a possible comprehensive schematic framework to contribute to the enhancement of CBT development through food. In this context the article also consistently expands without disagreement (Giampiccoli & Haywards Kalis (2012) previous study by including – towards building a more comprehensive framework – more aspects related to the relationship between CBT and food. After this introductory section, the article presents a literature review on CBT and Food tourism as a general background. Thereafter, a section will cover various aspects of the relationship between CBT and food. Thus, a proposed schematic framework of relationships between CBT and food is advanced. A conclusion terminates the article.

## **Literature review**

The popularity of CBT is reported to be on the rise and, for example, from a market perspective suggestions from Europe indicate that CBT “is a growing consumer market” in Europe (CBI, 2014:28). At the same time, while there has been a “popularization of

community-based tourism (CBT) in the developing countries lately, specifically among the rural communities” obstacles and constraints to CBT are still present (Goh, 2015:42; however, even if usually considered for rural communities CBT can also happen in urban contexts (Giampiccoli, Saayman & Jugmohan, 2014:1148). CBT is related to community empowerment and both government and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) see CBT as a valuable approach to attain development goals (Prachvuthy, 2006:27; see also Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:24). More specifically CBT “is commonly understood to be managed and owned by the community, for the community. It is a form of ‘local’ tourism that favours local service providers and suppliers and also focuses on interpreting and communicating the local culture and environment” (Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:24). The CBT enterprise is run by the community for community profit, that is community-based Ecotourism (CBET) “is managed and run by the community itself, management decisions are made by local people and profits directly go to the community” (Khanal & Babar, 2007:2; Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) should be seen as a CBT but with greater emphasis on environmental/ecological awareness). The ownership and management by the community (usually disadvantaged community members) of CBT often lead to the emergence of a number of possible constraints such as lack of resources, low skills and so on (see for example Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:28). An example from a Cambodian village proposes a number of constraints such as lack of skills and knowledge in the management of CBTs services (Prachvuthy, 2006:36). As such CBT must be owned and managed by community members and usually being poor/disadvantaged, a number of constraints can emerge. Knowing the various aspects of the relationship between CBT and food can assist to better plan and implement CBT, within the CBT-food milieu, the various aspects linking CBT and food towards community development.

Food tourism is growing and is seen as a major reason for tourists to travel so that globally for many tourists “returning to familiar destinations to enjoy tried and tested recipes, or traveling further afield in search of new and special cuisine, gastronomy has become a central part of the tourism experience” (Rifai, 2012:4). Food tourism should also be seen as a possible development tool. As such, rural areas also see food tourism as a new possible development strategy (Dougherty & Green, 2011). The possible development role of food tourism can be linked to the development role of CBT. In this sense CBT and food tourism should be put together to form a possible community-based food tourism (CBFT) form of tourism where local/indigenous food serves as a main attraction in CBT. Moreover, the growing market of food tourism proposes the need for CBT to adapt and emphasis its gastronomic side attempting to increase its possible potential. It is important to understand the various aspects in the relationship between CBT and food to enhance the possible role of food in CBT development.

Within the general tourism sector “food represents approximately one-third of all tourist expenditures” (Telfer & Wall, 1996:636). Food tourism should be seen as a learning experience of the gastronomy and culture of a specific territory (Mari Aizega, 2012:58). The relevance of food service and its role in tourist satisfaction should not be underestimated. In many tourism “statistics, tourism spending on accommodation and dining out averages 25% of the total spending” showing how dissatisfaction with food service can have negative repercussion on the general tourist experience and tourists desire to return to the same destination (Nield, Kozak & LeGrys, 2000:376).

The expenditures in food are also relevant in CBT as in any other business. Therefore, CBT also needs to be profitable in order to be sustainable. Importantly, CBT needs to become a self-sustaining business as such “CBT, when successful, becomes a self-sustaining business, generating income for the community free from the stipulations and controls of an aid agency or government body” (Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:25; see also Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013 about the link between CBT and self-reliance). In this context CBT should go towards bigger scale where “the scaling-up process should constantly assess,

upgrade/update and adapt the CBT working model to ensure self-reliance and long-term sustainability” (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2014:10). Thus, it is important to understand the various aspects of the relationship between CBT and food to enhance the chance of growth (scaling-up) CBT entities through the combined CBFT.

### **A proposed CBT-food relationship framework**

Most of the time the main reasons for CBT development are related to economic gain, skills development and cultural and environmental conservation. Put differently, the main aims of CBT (or CBET) are: “1) “To help alleviate poverty, for example through the job creation and income-generating activities that tourism can bring; 2) To help reduce rural-to-urban migration and strengthen local communities by giving young people real skills and local job prospects, allowing them to stay in their villages and use their skills and knowledge; and 3) To help conserve the cultural and natural heritage, notably by showing how cultural and environmental conservation and protection can enhance community assets as well as identities” (Tresilian, 2006:28). All these aspects can be included in the CBT-food milieu.

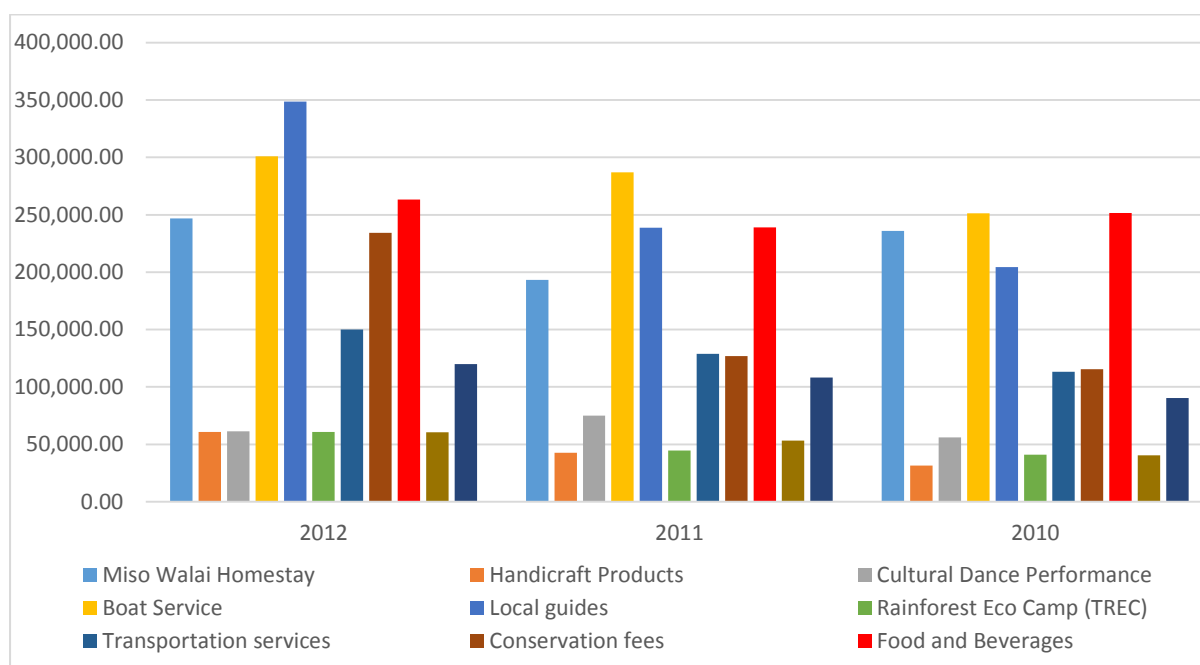
Following Sims (2009) it is argued local food and drinks can serve as development tools of both the tourism sector and the local community through sustainable agriculture, local business support and the development of a ‘brand’ that can serve to attract more visitors locally (Sims, 2009:322). A research shows these objectives are feasible through local food initiative and “it is possible to use the tourist’s desire for authenticity to encourage the development of products and services that will boost sustainability and benefit rural regions for visitors and residents alike” (Sims, 2009:322). As CBT is based on local people control, lifestyle, resources and that often produce; their own food can enhance the local sustainable development context.

Studies on the relationship between CBT and food/catering are present (see Giampiccoli & Hayward Kalis, 2012; Boonzaaier, 2009; Boonzaaier and Philip, 2007). Boonzaaier (2009) study investigates the applicability of government policy in regard to CBT catering in a South African community. His (Boonzaaier, 2009:89) conclusion proposes that the government policy objectives “can be realized, on condition that the positive attitudes of the residents are maintained by providing the necessary training.” Another study (Boonzaaier & Philip, 2007:37) on the same community proposed that the community “have the ideal combination of factors to turn their cultural heritage into a form of sustainable income, whilst at the same time preserving their heritage in a way they can control themselves” and the role of food can also propose the illumination and enhancement of the “pivotal role of women in an otherwise paternalistic society.” Giampiccoli and Hayward Kalis (2012:116) study instead investigated the role of local food especially indigenous food in holistic community development including issues of biodiversity, income, education and it proposed that “indigenous wild foods can be revived and suggested ways in which they can be used as a source for community development using CBT as a funnel strategy.”

Food is an important source of income in CBT context. Examples showing the value of food and cooking in CBT context are present, for example, just one case from Thailand shows that the source of income from food alone in that country represents 68% and 8% respectively. This income is generated from the selling of raw material as well as cooked food. The second case from the same country shows the figures of 71% and 11% respectively (Lyttleton & Allcock, 2002:58). An example from South Africa shows that “The percentage of income for caterers is almost 20 percent (19.8 percent) of the total income of the CBT venture, which means that about one-fifth of the revenue goes to the catering sector” (Giampiccoli & Haywards Kalis, 2012:110). This does not necessarily mean a great income in absolute terms but the final net profit is valuable in poor households and can contribute to women empowerment (Giampiccoli & Haywards Kalis, 2012:111). A home stay program with associated activities from Latin America seems to propose that cooks are the highest earners in the venture when looking at the following earnings: Cook \$20/event,

Mayan priest \$15/event, Guide \$15/4 hour tour and Musician \$10/concert (Jones & EplerWood International, 2008:20).

Selling of food can also serve to increase the distribution of income in the community when considering the backward linkages “of direct tourism sales of goods and services (e.g., the local purchases of meat and vegetables for food sold to tourists, or employment of locals in tourism enterprises), then income disparity would be less” (Untong, Phuangsaichai, Taweelertkunthon, Tejawaree, 2006:71, 78). Thus, it is argued that “From the point of view of policy, the design of CBT schemes should make a conscious effort to promote activities with a high degree of backward linkages so that income distribution effects are enhanced” (Untong, Phuangsaichai, Taweelertkunthon, Tejawaree, 2006:78). CBT can be associated with backwards linkages (see Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013:6; Ndlovu & Rogerson, 2003:127). Proper distribution of income from food and beverages can also be favoured when “Cooking and food sales are distributed by roster” (Lyttleton & Allcock, 2002:20). Finally, another example from Malaysian (see Graph 1) shows the high relevance (red column in Graph 1) of food and beverage sector (respectively 14% in 2012, 16% in 2011 and 18% in 2010 of the total) within the general CBT (Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:27).



**Graph 1. Income from CBT activities. Source: Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:27).**

The relevance of food income should not be a surprise given that an important motivational aspect for a visitor to go to CBT is local food (CBI, 2009:29). In this context the link to local culture is paramount given that local food is based on local culture knowledge as searched by the tourists. It is no surprise that the official policy related to CBT Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MHT) in Myanmar, proposes that “Local ethnic knowledge and local flora and fauna provide an exceptional starting point for nature related tourism attractions, such as bird watching or recreational fishing. Tourists appealed by this expertise would generate demand for food and beverages, village guiding, accommodation and ancillary services” (MHT, 2013:11).

However, a possible contradiction on the relationship (attraction) between tourist and local food can also be present as proposed by Cohen and Avieli (2004:755) when suggesting that at a conference related to local food and tourism “an overwhelming majority of papers were dedicated to local food as an attraction in different destinations.” However, the same authors

(Cohen & Avieli, 2004:755) suggest that “local food might also constitute a problem for the tourists.” In that same conference the possible conflict between tourists and local food were seemingly related exclusively to issues of health and hygiene and were regarded as “temporary and can be easily resolved” (Cohen & Avieli, 2004:755). In view of these observations, it is here supported that “Tourism depends on a safe, reliable and attractive food supply” and CBT should also offer similar safety and hygiene minimum requirement (CBI, 2009:68). Thailand is already in the game as it has proposed a ‘Thai CBTs and Clean Food Good Taste Standard’ that gives a wide array of practical methods and process for the preparation of food to be more safe for the tourists (CBI, 2009:68; see also CCBEN/SNV, 2009:10 in relation to food hygiene in CBT, see Box 1). The ‘Thai CBTs and Clean Food Good Taste Standard’ mentions that “In the preparation of food, communities that cooperate with the Northern Thailand CBT network should follow the Clean Food Good Taste Standard” listing 14 different matters related to food preparation and conservation such as that “Food must not be prepared or cooked on the floor, or areas in or in front of toilets. Food must be prepared and cooked on a table or platform at least 60 cm above the floor” (CBI, 2009:69). Beside safety and hygiene, other standard for food in CBT are recognised, including issues of ‘management’, ‘meals’ and ‘exchange experience’ (see Box1; this was specifically prepared for CBT projects in Cambodia). These various standards (see Box 1) give a comprehensive approach of how food should be managed in a CBT context, and, importantly, also mention the role of food in the learning experience of the tourist visiting the CBT.

**Box 1.**

**CBT FOOD AND BEVERAGE STANDARD**

CBT Food and beverage standards are applicable to providers of F&B in the CBT area(s) targeted to the visitors.

**MANAGEMENT**

- Timing: provide meals at agreed times
- Food sufficiency: understand tourist needs (snacks available)
- Decoration: Khmer style
- Menu and prices are updated and available
- Should have permit from community level
- Delivered friendly, courteous and honest when dealing with visitors
- Is proud to represent their community and provide a role model for other community members
- Does not tolerate child labor and support principles of gender equity and social inclusion
- Is a professional service provider who is ethical at all times and is not to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or any other intoxicating substances prior to and/or during the tour
- Has a practical waste management system by applying – avoid, reduce, reuse, recycle, compost principles
- Should use natural bio-degradable packaging (Banana leaves)
- Collects special dietary restrictions up front from tour operators or visitors
- Delivers the menu according to agreements and informs on time when (items of the) menu cannot be delivered
- Always provides a backup from the menu

**HYGIENE**

- Clean water and soap in kitchen
- Treated or boiled water available for food preparation including cleaning e.g. raw salad vegetables
- Wash hand before cooking
- Clean and organized kitchen at all times
- Food prepared and cooked on a bench
- Hygiene in food preparation – clean utensils, all local animals and children kept away from cooking area

- Food storage facilities to be kept clean and in a good order on a regular daily basis
- Hygienic storage (containers) of all relevant foodstuffs used on the premises should be ensured
- Pests and vermin to be controlled in food preparation and storage area
- Kitchen area should not be close to washrooms, waste dump sites or bathrooms

#### **MEALS**

- Local ingredients: fresh meat and vegetable, no bush meats.
- Special cuisine
- Food variety
- Food for vegetarian
- Local ingredients
- Dessert and fruit
- Preferably ingredients used from local farming out of the community's immediate surroundings

#### **EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE:**

- Opportunities for tourists to participate in cooking activities alongside host community members if possible
  - community can provide a cooking classes
- Opportunities for tourists and host to participate in food learning exchange

**Box1. CBT food and beverage standard. Source: CCBEN/SNV (2009:10).**

Congruent with the argument that in CBT “Capacity building should be seen as a necessary pre-condition in the implementation of practical projects” (Giampiccoli, Jugmohan & Mtapuri, 2014:659) it has been proposed that “Before full operation of the tour program can start the village and its partners need to acquire skills and experience in operating CBT” and ‘food preparation’ is one of such skills that need to be acquired through training (Tuffin, 2005:181).

Various issues proposed above serve to present, with the support of few other arguments, a possible comprehensive framework (see Figure 1) on the relationships between CBT and food. Figure 1 shows the various aspects related to the relationship between CBT and food and can be divided into roughly 4 main sections.

The first section is related to the food as a tourist attraction indicating that food in CBT can have an attraction role, a learning role but also it can be a problem for the tourist and be ‘rejected’ as attraction.

The second section proposed all various matters related to food production and selling. This section can be seen as falling within the general matters related to food standards in CBT and also including specific issues such as training and distinction between own product (i.e. in vegetable garden) or bought (locally or ‘imported’) food. This last distinction is relevant to emphasise the possible link of CBT with the local economy, thus valuing the possible backward linkages that CBT have on the local context.

A third section (the top-right part of Figure 1) is included (summarised) from Giampiccoli and Haywards Kalis (2012:111) and shows how food especially local conventional food and indigenous food can contribute to community the livelihoods development through various aspects such as income generation, biodiversity, education and so on. This is important because “Community-based tourism (CBT) and community development are inherently interlinked” (Mizal, Fabeil & Pazim, 2014:25). A final fourth section (bottom-right) includes the need of positive government policies and people (especially the people involved in the CBT entities) in relation to the support and advancement of CBFT.

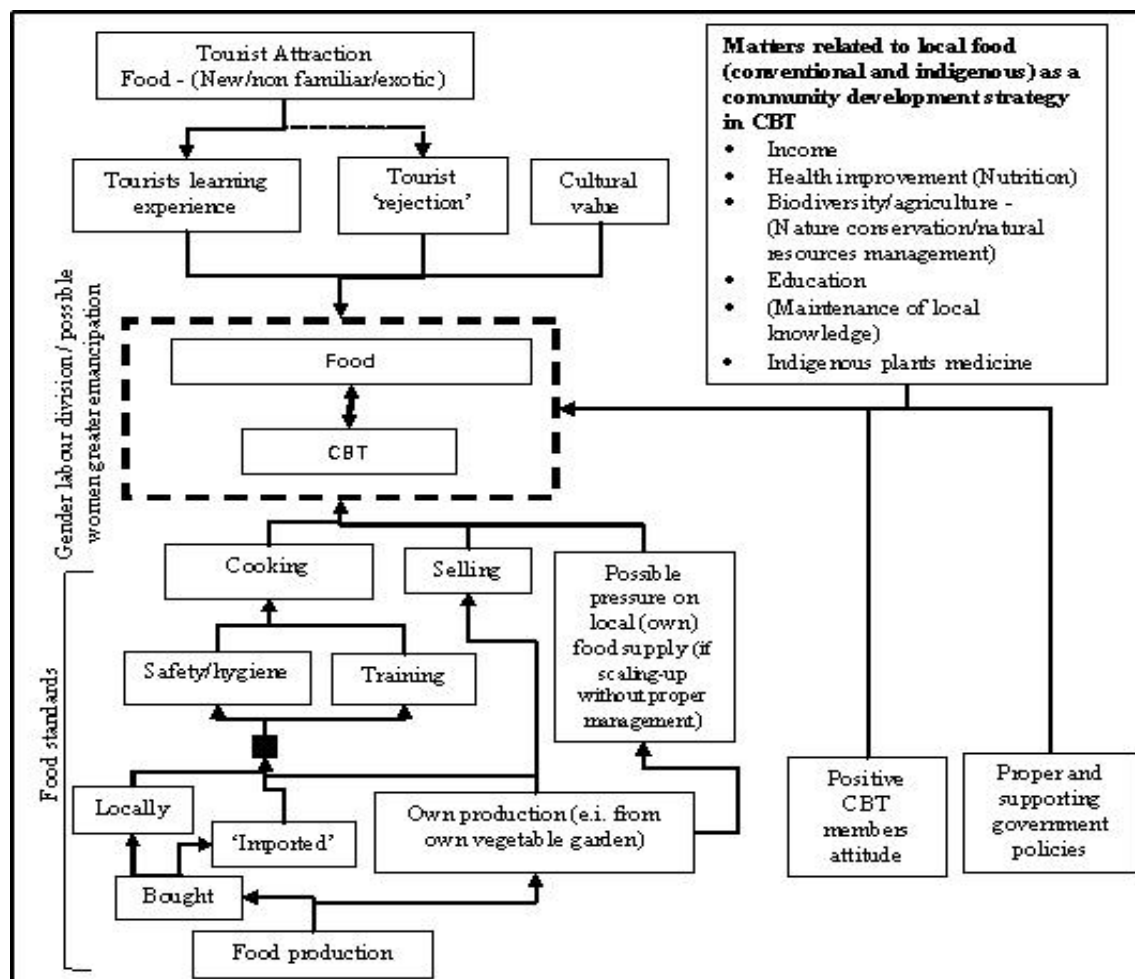


Figure 1. General framework between CBT and food. Source: authors elaboration (left section); simplified from Giampiccoli & Haywards Kalis (2012:111) (Top-Right section)

In addition matters related to gender relation can be presented in relation to food in CBT indicating that women usually (although not necessarily always) are the main protagonist in food production, selling and other activities related to it within CBT. For example, “The nature of community tourism work leads to a division of duties along gender lines, with men occupying roles as guides and boat drivers, while women are responsible for food, homestay, and handicrafts” (Garrett & de Silva, 2009:3). Even if it is not possible to generalise, this gender division of roles could also have positive remark in CBT. Gender division in CBT should not be seen as necessarily conflicting “with cultural or family obligations such as taking care of children or the elderly. As women are typically the primary household caregivers, income from tourism can directly affect household income and quality of life” (Garrett and de Silva, 2009:4; see also Boonzaaier & Philip, 2007:37). Care should be taken to not ‘overload’ women by adding to them CBT roles on top of traditional household roles, a proper balance that still facilitate women empowerment should be advanced.

It is the understanding of all the various aspects that link CBT with food that can serve to ameliorate (and enhance) the role of food in CBT as a strategy to community development. Only when food is properly managed can augment its tourist attractiveness and reinforce its position as one of the main pillars in CBT development. For example, if a CBT entity proposes great local food on paper but the same food is served improperly with inappropriate hygiene conditions the result will be negative for the tourists. By the same token, food bought from outside the village (imported) will have a weak positive impact on the welfare of the community even though prepared well. Food to be used should preferably



be a local produce. These two examples show that to improve the role of food in CBT a proper array of aspects must be considered. It is in this context of enhanced role of food as a possible main tourist's attraction that the specific form of CBT namely CBFT can emerge and evolve.

## Conclusion

The article has investigated various aspects on the relationship between CBT and food. While not pretending to be fully comprehensive, as each context can propose specific aspects, various aspects such as tourism attraction (or 'rejection') of local food, matters in food safety and hygiene, role of food in backwards linkages in the local economy, gender division in CBT, and so on were also mentioned. Thereafter the article presented a possible general framework of relationship between CBT and food, arguing that to enhance food's position in CBT all various aspects of the relationship between CBT and food need to be considered. Possibly this positive relationship between CBT and food can promote a new form of CBT namely CBFT. The article does not pretend to be comprehensive but it advances the need to comprehend food in CBT from various perspectives.

It is the proper understanding of the CBT-food relationships that can improve a good tourist experience and, at the same time, better contribute to CBT and associated community development. In this context the article aims to contribute to the literature on CBT as a development tool, proposing the need that food tourism, as a specific form of tourism, if properly managed within a CBT context (thus CBFT) can become a cornerstone attraction of the tourist experience and, at the same time, deliver positive impact at community level.

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