

Tourism Impacts and Community Sustainability: A Qualitative Study of Kobuni Village, Malaysia, and Albuquerque Village, Philippines

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Abstract

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been recognized as a pathway to sustainable regional development, balancing economic opportunities with cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. This study explores the impacts of CBT development in Kobuni Village, Malaysia, and Albuquerque Village, Philippines, based on narratives from three key informants who are community leaders and top management. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed thematically, revealing four key themes: economic impacts, socio-cultural contributions, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. The findings show that both villages have successfully leveraged tourism to enhance livelihoods, cultural pride, and environmental awareness, albeit through different approaches. Kobuni Village emphasizes inclusive participation, structured community engagement, and environmental innovation, while Albuquerque Village highlights cultural entrepreneurship and heritage-based product development. Despite differing approaches, both communities demonstrate how tourism can be developed in ways that align with local values, strengthen social cohesion, and support long-term sustainability. This study affirms the role of community leadership and engagement in shaping positive tourism experiences and outcomes in rural settings.

Keywords Community-Based Tourism, Sustainable Regional Development, Malaysia, Philippines, Tourism Impact Assessment

Introduction

Community-based tourism (CBT) has gained global recognition as a viable pathway to achieving sustainable development, especially in rural and indigenous communities. By placing residents at the centre of tourism planning, CBT aims to generate economic benefits while safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting environmental stewardship (Hlengwa & Maruta, 2020; Jackson, 2025). In theory, CBT aligns with the principles of sustainability by ensuring that tourism development is equitable, participatory, and ecologically responsible (Abreu et al., 2024). However, the practical implementation of CBT remains complex, particularly in balancing the economic aspirations of local communities with the imperatives of cultural preservation and ecological protection. As tourism grows in regions rich in natural and cultural assets, questions emerge about its long-term implications for community well-being. This study is significant as it contributes to the growing body of literature on CBT by focusing on the unique contexts of Kobuni Village, Malaysia, and Albuquerque Village, Philippines. These regions, both rich in cultural heritage and natural biodiversity, offer an invaluable lens through which the impacts of CBT on community development can be examined. Understanding how local communities experience and perceive the effects of tourism is crucial, as it informs the development of policies that can enhance sustainability while maintaining cultural integrity. Furthermore, the study's comparative nature adds depth by offering insights into the varying approaches and outcomes of CBT across different cultural and ecological landscapes.

Despite the increasing popularity of CBT models in Southeast Asia, there are notable gaps in empirical research regarding how local communities perceive and experience tourism impacts. Much of the existing literature focuses heavily on economic indicators, such as income generation and job creation, with limited attention to socio-cultural changes and environmental consequences (Giampiccoli et al., 2022; Habiba & Lina, 2023; Zielinski et al., 2021). This study, by examining both economic, cultural, and environmental perspectives, will address these gaps and demonstrate the importance of inclusive community engagement. It provides a more comprehensive understanding of how CBT can be adapted to serve not only the economic interests of communities but also their social, cultural, and environmental needs. Furthermore, comparative studies that capture cross-cultural and cross-national perspectives on CBT remain scarce. In Malaysia and the Philippines, two biodiversity-rich countries with significant cultural diversity, CBT initiatives have proliferated, yet the voices of community members involved in or affected by tourism remain underexplored. This study responds to this gap by comparing the experiences of Kobuni Village in Sabah, Malaysia, and Albuquerque Village in Bohol, Philippines. Both villages have embraced CBT, albeit with differing levels of institutional support and management structures.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of community members regarding the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts of tourism. It seeks to identify both the benefits and challenges experienced by residents and to assess the broader implications of tourism for community well-being and sustainability. The study also aims to contribute to the discourse on ethical and inclusive tourism by offering context-specific recommendations that can inform policy and practice. More specifically, this research addresses the following questions: What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of tourism from the perspective of community members? How does tourism influence the socio-economic conditions, cultural practices, and environmental sustainability of the community? By centering local knowledge

and lived experiences, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of CBT and its role in advancing sustainable and equitable development.

Literature Review

Community-Based Tourism (CBT): Concept, Principles, and Relevance

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has gained increasing attention as an alternative form of tourism that seeks to empower local communities and promote sustainability. It emphasizes participatory planning, community ownership, and the equitable distribution of benefits from tourism activities (Hlengwa & Maruta, 2020; Pengiran Bagul & Ag. Samad, 2022; Zielinski et al., 2021). Jackson (2025) outline CBT principles that include capacity building, cultural preservation, environmental responsibility, and strong institutional partnerships. CBT is also seen to resist the adverse effects of mass tourism by ensuring that tourism development is aligned with the aspirations and capabilities of host communities (Nainggolan et al., 2024).

In the context of sustainable development, CBT is positioned as a tool to operationalize the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) (Franco & Newey, 2020). However, achieving these outcomes requires a balance between economic viability and the protection of socio-cultural and environmental assets (Mohd Radzi et al., 2025).

Tourism's Socio-Economic, Cultural, and Environmental Impacts

Tourism can bring significant changes to host communities, both positive and negative. On the economic side, tourism has the potential to create income-generating opportunities, diversify rural economies, and reduce poverty (Faraji et al., 2021). In many developing countries, CBT has been adopted as a strategy for livelihood diversification, especially in marginalized or remote areas (Zielinski et al., 2021). Yet, the economic benefits are often unevenly distributed, with elite capture and dependency on external actors being common issues (Giampiccoli, 2020). Culturally, tourism may facilitate the revitalization of traditional practices and promote cross-cultural understanding (Prasad, 2024). However, it also poses risks such as cultural commodification, loss of identity, and superficial representations of local traditions for tourist consumption (Rusmana et al., 2025). These dynamics can influence social cohesion and intergenerational relationships, particularly in indigenous and rural communities.

From an environmental perspective, well-managed tourism can support conservation initiatives and generate funds for the protection of biodiversity (Ibrahim, Johari, Yahya, et al., 2024). However, unregulated tourism can exacerbate environmental degradation through waste generation, water overuse, and disruption of fragile ecosystems (Van Schaaijk et al., 2020). The role of local governance, tourism planning, and environmental awareness among community members is critical in mitigating such risks (Chan et al., 2021).

Case Studies and CBT Experiences in Malaysia and the Philippines

In Malaysia, CBT is supported by national frameworks such as the Rural Tourism Master Plan and the Homestay Programme, which promote community participation and cultural exchange (Bhuiyan et al., 2013). Successful cases, such as the Kampung Beng CBT in Perak and Mah Meri Cultural Village in Selangor, illustrate how structured management, collaboration

with NGOs, and integration of indigenous knowledge can lead to resilient and inclusive tourism systems (Ismail, 2020; Majin et al., 2016). In the Philippines, community-based ecotourism has been widely implemented in coastal and upland areas, often with support from local governments and development agencies. Initiatives like those in Donsol (whale shark tourism) and Bohol (community-managed mangrove tours) have demonstrated the potential of tourism to support conservation and empower local actors (Carandang et al., 2013; Ziegler, 2019). However, disparities in policy implementation, varying levels of capacity, and pressure from commercial tourism actors continue to challenge the long-term sustainability of these projects (Ceron & Dubois, 2003). Both countries share similarities in their adoption of CBT as a development tool but differ in terms of institutional support, tourism scale, and cultural governance. Comparative analyses between Malaysian and Philippine CBT sites are limited, yet necessary, for drawing broader conclusions about the mechanisms that drive inclusive and sustainable community tourism.

Gaps in the Literature and Justification for Comparative Research

Despite the growing body of literature on Community-Based Tourism (CBT), critical gaps persist in capturing the lived experiences, agency, and localized knowledge of community members—especially within the Southeast Asian context. Existing research has predominantly concentrated on project-level performance metrics, such as visitor numbers, income generation, and infrastructure development (Dłużewska et al., 2022; Giampiccoli et al., 2022). These studies, while valuable, often prioritize external benchmarks of success and overlook the subjective dimensions of community participation, empowerment, and social cohesion (Jamal et al., 2019; Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017; Rocharungsat, 2008). Moreover, many case studies tend to adopt a binary framing—either highlighting exemplary models of CBT success or critiquing failed interventions—thus failing to examine the more nuanced, dynamic, and iterative processes that unfold in real community contexts. This leaves a critical gap in understanding the tensions, compromises, and negotiations that often underpin CBT initiatives, particularly in communities grappling with shifting economic pressures, environmental changes, and intergenerational value systems.

Importantly, there is a notable lack of comparative research that systematically examines how different political, cultural, and ecological contexts shape the outcomes of CBT. Such studies are essential in revealing patterns, divergences, and context-specific adaptations that may not be evident in single-site analyses. Comparative inquiry enables researchers to better understand the role of governance structures, community organization, cultural worldviews, and external partnerships in shaping tourism development pathways (Jugmohan et al., 2020; Walia, 2021; Zielinski, Jeong, et al., 2020; Zielinski, Kim, et al., 2020). This study addresses these gaps by comparing two culturally distinct yet thematically aligned CBT sites: Kobuni Village in Malaysia and Albuquerque Village in the Philippines. Both sites are situated within biodiversity-rich settings and are engaged in tourism practices that intersect with cultural heritage, environmental stewardship, and rural livelihoods. By foregrounding the voices, experiences, and strategies of local actors in these communities, the research aims to uncover how residents conceptualize tourism development, negotiate its impacts, and envision its future. This approach not only enriches academic understanding of CBT but also contributes practical insights for designing more ethically grounded, inclusive, and context-sensitive tourism policies in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights into the experiences, perceptions, and practices of community leaders and tourism operators in Kobuni Village (Malaysia) and Albuquerque Village (Philippines). The semi-guided interview protocol allows flexibility in exploring various themes while ensuring key topics such as socio-economic impacts, cultural identity, environmental conservation, and sustainability are consistently addressed (Brinkmann, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016). This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the effects of community-based tourism (CBT) in these two villages, capturing rich and detailed responses from informants.

Study Sites

The study was conducted in two culturally rich villages: Kobuni Village in Malaysia, located in the Sabah region of Borneo, and Albuquerque Village in Bohol, Philippines (refer Figure 1). These sites were specifically selected for their rich cultural heritage, unique tourism practices, and active engagement in community-based tourism (CBT), which integrates local culture, environmental protection, and community empowerment.

Kobuni Village, home to the Dusun ethnic group, is renowned for its traditional customs and cultural practices, which are actively incorporated into tourism initiatives that promote local arts, crafts, and cultural performances while ensuring environmental sustainability and socio-economic empowerment. Similarly, Albuquerque Village, located in Bohol, is known for its traditional Asín Tibuok salt-making process. The village's involvement in heritage tourism has allowed it to preserve and promote this unique practice while benefiting economically through tourism (Chong & Balasingam, 2019). Both villages were selected because they reflect successful cases of community-based tourism that integrate cultural heritage with sustainable practices, making them ideal locations for exploring the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism.



Figure 1. Location of Kobuni Village and Bohol Village.

Sampling Method

The study used purposive sampling to select key informants (refer Table 1) who were directly involved in the community-based tourism efforts in their respective villages. This approach

ensures the selection of participants who have in-depth knowledge of the local tourism operations and can provide rich insights into the tourism impacts on their communities (Patton, 2014). Purposive sampling was chosen for its ability to identify informants who hold key positions in the community's tourism operations and who can offer valuable information on the impacts of community-based tourism.

Table 1

Key informants interviewed

Key Informant	Position	Study site	Gender	Age	Nationality
K1	Head of Villager	Kobuni Village, Malaysia	Male	57	Malaysian (Dusun)
K2	Homestay coordinator		Female	47	Malaysian (Dusun)
K3	Top management of the Asin Tibuok	Bohol Village, Philippines	Female	63	Filipino

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in person and audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of responses. The interviews followed a pre-designed protocol covering topics such as quality of life; socio-economic transformations; environmental conservation; cultural identity; and sustainability. This semi-structured interview format allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to share their experiences in-depth while ensuring that the key themes were consistently addressed across all interviews. Interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the informant's availability and the depth of their responses. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, with all participants providing informed consent, being assured of their right to confidentiality, and being made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (Mirza et al., 2023).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Talib (2019)'s approach to thematic analysis, which employs an inductive approach to data coding and categorization. This process begins by familiarizing oneself with the interview data through repeated readings of the transcripts. According to Talib (2019), the initial coding process is inductive, meaning the codes emerge directly from the data rather than being based on pre-established themes. Once initial codes are generated, they are grouped into broader themes that reflect key concepts such as cultural preservation, economic sustainability, and environmental conservation. These themes are then refined through further categorization, with any overlaps or redundancies resolved, resulting in a coherent thematic structure that aligns with the research questions. The final interpretation involves contextualizing these themes within the study's broader objectives, offering insights into the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of community-based tourism. Atlas.ti version 8 was used for thematic analysis, facilitating the systematic organization, coding, and categorization of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2018).

Results and Discussion

This study identified four primary themes from the narratives of the three key informants (K1, K2 from Kobuni Village, Malaysia, and K3 from Albuquerque Village, Philippines) regarding tourism impacts: economic impacts, socio-cultural impacts, environmental impacts, and community well-being and sustainability. The findings reveal distinct approaches and experiences related to community-based tourism (CBT) in both villages.

Economic Impacts: Community vs. Commercial Approaches

Tourism has generated economic benefits in both Kobuni Village (Malaysia) and Albuquerque Village (Philippines); however, the modalities of economic development and institutional engagement differ substantially between the two contexts. Kobuni exemplifies a community-centered economic model that emphasizes inclusivity and active institutional collaboration. As K2 articulated, “We have had good cooperation with Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu. Eventually, we managed to become the first homestay registered with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia in the Kota Kinabalu District. It had always been our dream to run a homestay, but we didn’t know how to start—and I was just a kid back then. But once we were exposed to the idea and learned more, we decided to take on the challenge” (K2). This framework enables a diversified income portfolio encompassing homestay operations, traditional crafts, food production, and community-driven initiatives such as recycling programs supported by Kota Kinabalu City Hall and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (K2).

The significance of formalized institutional partnerships in fostering sustainable community-based tourism is well documented in the literature. Penglipuran Village in Bali, Indonesia, provides a pertinent parallel where local government engagement facilitated the formal registration of homestay accommodations and capacity-building workshops, which in turn enhanced community participation and equitable economic benefit distribution (Pemayun et al., 2023). Similarly, the Amba Yaalu Resort in Sri Lanka benefited from collaborative efforts between governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations, resulting in strengthened cultural preservation and socioeconomic empowerment among women (Mallawarachi, 2025). These cases corroborate the assertion that institutional support is critical to effective CBT governance, community empowerment, and economic sustainability. In contrast, Albuquerque Village exhibits a commercialized economic model that revolves around the artisanal production and commercialization of Asin Tibuok salt. Historically, salt-makers (asinderos) were important professions in Philippine society, but the craft is now nearly extinct due to the labor-intensive traditional production methods and competition from inexpensive imported salt. The passage of Republic Act No. 8172—the Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide—in 1995 further pressured local producers, forcing many to abandon the industry (FAO, 2019; Montojo et al., 2024). Today, only a few families continue producing Asin Tibuok and Túltul salts, which are primarily sold for their novelty to tourists and to gourmet restaurants specializing in Filipino cuisine (Montojo et al., 2024). Due to their rarity and artisanal nature, these salts command premium prices and face demand that often exceeds supply (Tan et al., 2022). Notably, Asin Tibuok has been internationally recognized by its inclusion in the Ark of Taste catalogue of endangered heritage foods by the Slow Food movement, which highlights its cultural and gastronomic significance (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, 2025).

K3 reported, "It's great... it has become a trading business with celebrities, restaurants, resorts" (K3). Although formal institutional support is less embedded than Kobuni's, K3 acknowledged receipt of financial assistance: "Agencies like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) have done something where we were given a grant for a small expansion at our production site to increase production" (K3). This type of targeted grant aligns with global patterns wherein governmental funding catalyzes economic diversification and enterprise expansion within community tourism settings, such as artisanal fishing communities in the Azores, Portugal (Neilson & São Marcos, 2016), and coastal ecotourism ventures in Vietnam (Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2020). However, the relative paucity of comprehensive institutional frameworks in Albuquerque limits broader capacity building and the integration of the community into wider sustainable tourism governance networks. Moreover, Kobuni's formal recognition as the first homestay registered under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia in the Kota Kinabalu District (Sivanesan, 2024) highlights the critical role of institutional endorsement in conferring market legitimacy and fostering consumer confidence. Comparable formal certification schemes in rural Tuscany, Italy (Biagini, 2012) and indigenous tourism enterprises in the Scandinavian Arctic (García-Rosell, 2016) have demonstrated positive effects on market visibility and sustainable business operations.

In summary, although both communities derive economic gains from tourism, Kobuni's model is characterized by multi-level institutional support fostering inclusivity and sustainability, whereas Albuquerque's commercially focused model, despite promising market prospects, contends with challenges stemming from limited institutional integration and uneven access to governmental resources.

Socio-Cultural Impacts: Preservation vs. Commercialization

Tourism impacts cultural identity, community cohesion, and cultural erosion in varying ways across different contexts. Kobuni Village (Malaysia) emphasizes inclusivity and cultural preservation through structured community engagement. The village organizes tourism-related activities at the block level, integrating traditional foods, crafts, and performances into its tourism offerings. As K2 noted, "We have block-level activities such as traditional foods, crafts, and performances... it brings the community together" (K2). This structured, inclusive approach fosters a strong sense of cultural identity and pride, with tourism serving as a tool for empowerment and community cohesion. This model aligns closely with the inclusivity paradigm demonstrated by the Amba Yaalu Resort in Sri Lanka, where women's empowerment and economic opportunities underpin community welfare and cultural resilience (Kodithuwakku, 2025). Kobuni's deliberate engagement of marginalized groups, such as single mothers, and its block-level cultural programming underscore a community-driven preservation strategy that facilitates intergenerational transmission of Dusun heritage. In contrast, Albuquerque Village (Philippines) reflects a more commercially driven cultural tourism approach. The community's promotion of Asin Tibuok, a traditional salt-making practice, has garnered international attention and commercial success. As K3 remarked, "I have inherited the legacy of our ancestors... the whole world is interested in knowing and using whole salt" (K3). While this evokes cultural pride and global recognition, the commercialization carries inherent risks of prioritizing profitability over cultural authenticity. This mirrors concerns raised in other CBT contexts, such as

other CBT contexts, such as the Akha and Karen hill tribes of Northern Thailand, where commercialization of traditional practices, like the sale of handicrafts and cultural performances to tourists, has raised concerns about the commodification of their culture and the erosion of authenticity (Trupp, 2014).

A critical distinction between Kobuni and Albuquerque lies in their approaches to cultural preservation. Kobuni's model actively integrates culture into community-led tourism initiatives, ensuring that local traditions are continuously practiced and adapted in line with tourism demands. Conversely, Albuquerque's strategy is more reliant on external market appreciation and commercial demand, which can lead to dilution or commodification of cultural practices. Moreover, efforts by the Philippine government to nominate the traditional Asin Tibuok-making process for the 2025 UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list represent an important initiative to safeguard this cultural practice at a global level. This formal recognition may counterbalance commercialization pressures by reinforcing cultural legitimacy and conservation (UNESCO, 2024).

Effective strategies for sustainable CBT must consider how tourism development impacts cultural identity and community cohesion both locally and globally. Kobuni's inclusive and participatory model provides an example of community ownership and empowerment in cultural tourism, contrasting with approaches like the Maasai Mara region in Kenya that prioritize visitor number limitations to protect heritage (Juma et al., 2020; Tubey et al., 2019). Balancing economic benefits with cultural preservation remains a complex and context-dependent challenge requiring adaptive governance and stakeholder collaboration.

Environmental Impacts: Structured versus Incidental Conservation

Environmental sustainability constitutes a critical dimension of community-based tourism (CBT) in both Kobuni and Albuquerque villages, though their approaches and outcomes differ substantially. Kobuni Village exhibits a structured and proactive environmental stewardship model embedded within its tourism framework. The community has implemented practical conservation measures such as a recycling initiative that transforms plastic bottle caps into beads for crafting accessories. As K2 explained, "We collect plastic bottle caps and process them into beads... supported by Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu, promoting a circular economy" (K2). Complementing this, K1 noted, "We have a system to manage waste and keep the village clean... environmental awareness is part of our routine" (K1). These measures reflect effective integration of environmental management into local governance and tourism operations. Such institutionalized environmental stewardship parallels conservation-linked CBT programs elsewhere, including Gunung Mulu National Park, Malaysia, where community involvement and governmental support combine to protect biodiversity while sustaining tourism livelihoods (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

In contrast, Albuquerque Village's environmental management is characterized by incidental and emerging awareness without formalized programs. K3 emphasized the necessity of maintaining environmental cleanliness: "Maintaining cleanliness on land and ocean is necessary for our production" (K3), yet no structured waste or resource conservation initiatives comparable to Kobuni's were evident. This reactive stance is consistent with patterns seen in many rapidly commercializing CBT destinations globally, where

environmental management often lags behind economic expansion, risking ecological degradation (Benner, 2019; Nurhasanah & Van den Broeck, 2025).

European community-based tourism (CBT) destinations have adopted restrictive visitor management strategies to alleviate environmental impacts, such as imposing limits on tourist numbers and establishing regulatory controls over natural resource usage. For instance, Venice has introduced measures like a tourist entry fee, restrictions on cruise ship arrivals, and caps on group sizes to better control visitor numbers and reduce environmental strain (Camatti, 2022). In Barcelona, regulations have been put in place to limit short-term rentals, including a plan to phase out 10,000 tourist apartment licenses by 2028 in an effort to address housing shortages and combat overtourism (Gyódi et al., 2025). Similarly, Cappadocia has implemented restrictions on the number of daily hot air balloon flights and regulates off-road vehicle use to preserve its distinctive geological formations and cultural heritage (Ardıç Yetiş et al., 2022).

Kobuni's approach, embedding environmental responsibility within routine community and tourism governance, presents a more integrative and socially inclusive model. Albuquerque's current environmental efforts, though mindful, remain largely informal and risk insufficient resilience to growing tourism pressures. These contrasting approaches underscore the importance of institutional support, community capacity, and formal frameworks in embedding sustainability within CBT. Without systematic environmental governance, the ecological foundations vital to tourism and community well-being may be compromised, threatening long-term sustainability (Ibrahim, Johari, Assim, et al., 2024).

Well-Being and Sustainability: Collective Vs. Individual Success

Community well-being and sustainability are central outcomes of community-based tourism (CBT) in both Kobuni and Albuquerque villages; however, the nature and extent of these outcomes differ markedly between the two contexts.

Kobuni Village exemplifies a holistic and collective approach to well-being, rooted in inclusive participation, community empowerment, and structured governance. As K2 stated, "We ensure that everyone has a role in tourism... so benefits reach the whole village, not just a few individuals." This inclusive framework fosters social cohesion, resilience, and mutual support within the community. Reinforcing this view, K1 observed, "The community works together to improve and maintain our village as a model for sustainable living." Such governance aligns with global CBT frameworks that integrate economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions to enhance overall community resilience and quality of life (Hlengwa & Maruta, 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2023).

In contrast, Albuquerque Village exhibits individual economic gains resulting from tourism, characterized by increased household incomes and expanded educational opportunities. K3 reported, "Income has increased, and children can go to school until college." Despite these improvements, perceptions of tourism's long-term sustainability within the community are mixed. K3 acknowledged that "Some people think positively, and some people think negatively... If they don't care about how to handle the lifestyle that results from increasing income... it may cause problems." This ambivalence reflects wider debates in CBT research, where enhanced economic conditions do not always translate into cohesive social benefits or

sustainable cultural and environmental practices (Habiba & Lina, 2023; Nainggolan et al., 2024).

Beyond these social and economic considerations, the production of Asin Tibuok is intricately linked to environmental factors and artisanal expertise. Rainy seasons significantly disrupt the critical evaporation process required for salt production, while the asinderos' traditional knowledge—such as skillful judgment of optimal heat, timing, and an understanding of local ecological variables—is vital for maintaining the product's quality and heritage (K3). This delicate balance highlights the vulnerability of artisanal salt-making to climatic variability and socio-economic transformations, with direct implications for both economic sustainability and cultural preservation.

More broadly, the findings reveal that both villages face substantial challenges in balancing economic growth with cultural and environmental sustainability, though their strategies for managing these tensions diverge. Kobuni's approach tightly links community well-being with structured tourism management and empowerment programs. This collective model is reflected in similar cases such as Thaka Floating Market in Thailand, where active local participation promotes social cohesion and shared prosperity (Pongajarn et al., 2018). Kobuni's sustainability is further reinforced by environmental initiatives, such as its collaboration with Kota Kinabalu City Hall on recycling projects that help maintain ecological balance while providing alternative income sources for community members.

Meanwhile, Albuquerque's stronger emphasis on commercialization has led to improved financial well-being but introduces challenges related to equitable wealth distribution and long-term cultural sustainability. The key informant highlighted, "Our focus is on producing and selling Asin Tibuok to a wider market, ensuring that our traditional salt-making business thrives," illustrating an economic model that is more individually oriented compared to Kobuni's collective governance. Similar dynamics have been observed in Penglipuran Village, Bali, where tourism benefits tend to be less evenly distributed when collective management is weak (Briliyanti, 2021). Unlike Kobuni, Albuquerque lacks formalized sustainability programs, and the growing commercial demand raises concerns about overproduction and resource strain, echoing challenges faced by artisanal industries in post-disaster contexts such as Wajima, Japan (Hiyama, 2024).

In sum, Kobuni Village presents a more integrated and holistic model of well-being by combining economic, social, and environmental sustainability within its tourism framework to ensure that benefits reach the entire community. Albuquerque Village highlights the risks associated with commercialization-driven growth, where financial success may come at the expense of cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. These contrasting approaches underscore the essential need to balance immediate economic incentives with long-term community resilience and sustainability. Kobuni's inclusive and structured management resonates with successful CBT models globally, while Albuquerque exemplifies the complexities and vulnerabilities faced by communities pursuing rapid commercialization without comprehensive governance and capacity-building mechanisms.

Conclusion

This study compared the impacts of community-based tourism (CBT) in Kobuni Village, Malaysia, and Albuquerque Village, Philippines, revealing four key themes: economic, sociocultural, environment, and well-being and sustainability. Kobuni demonstrated a holistic, community-centered model supported by strong institutional partnerships, while Albuquerque showcased a product-driven approach centered on the traditional Asin Tibuok salt-making industry. Both models generated income and cultural pride, but differed in terms of governance, inclusivity, and environmental management. The findings underscore that CBT can contribute meaningfully to sustainable rural development, but success depends heavily on inclusive participation, local leadership, and structured support. Kobuni's integrated tourism governance encouraged broad community engagement and environmental stewardship, while Albuquerque's commercial success exposed vulnerabilities in cultural preservation and sustainability due to limited institutional involvement. For future research, areas such as digital innovation in CBT, youth and women's participation, and long-term cultural resilience should be explored. These dimensions are increasingly relevant as communities adapt to globalization and climate change. From a policy perspective, the study recommends: (1) strengthening institutional frameworks to support CBT governance; (2) enhancing capacity-building programs; (3) embedding inclusive mechanisms for marginalized groups; and (4) integrating community-led environmental initiatives. Tailored strategies are essential to ensure that CBT initiatives are not only economically viable but also culturally respectful and environmentally responsible. In conclusion, community-based tourism, when grounded in strong local values and inclusive systems, holds great potential as a sustainable development tool across Southeast Asia.

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