

---

**Andrea Giampiccoli**

Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Durban University of Technology and Faculty of Tourism Studies, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

**Long Pham Hong**

Faculty of Tourism Studies, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

**Oliver Mtapuri**

School of Built Environment and Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

---

**A Potential Model for a Private Travel Company-Community Partnership in Community-based Tourism: The Case of Mekong Rustic, Vietnam**

Inequality is a growing global challenge. However, the current mainstream tourism approach has not decreased inequality. New approaches need to be devised to enable this valuable sector to fight against inequality and poverty. Worldwide, tourism is a leading sector whose contribution to development should not be underestimated. This article recognizes community-based tourism (CBT) as an approach that can contribute to achieving this objective. However, for this to happen, CBT needs to be correctly implemented to grow. While the government is often regarded as a key player in promoting CBT development and growth, the private sector can also play a crucial part in that endeavor, as shown in this article. Much of the information is based on an interview with a key informant and data from document analysis. Using a case study in Vietnam, the article analyzes a private company's role in CBT in a private sector-community CBT partnership model. Bearing in mind the importance of context, the model is an example of how CBT can flourish in a partnership. While the private company does not represent CBT itself, the approach represents a valuable strategy that could positively contribute towards robust CBT development if enhanced and managed within specific timeframes and goals. The findings reveal that private firms can help families register and participate in CBT. They can also help them improve their facilities, products, services, and marketing and public relation skills development, including expanding their business networks.

---

Key words: Community-based tourism, alternative tourism, Vietnam, private travel company, community partnership

**Andrea Giampiccoli**

Department of Hospitality and Tourism, Durban University of Technology and Faculty of Tourism Studies, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities

Contact:

PO Box 1334, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)31 373 3022

Fax: +27(0)31 373 5514

Email: [andrea.giampiccoli@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.giampiccoli@gmail.com)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2963-2031>

**Long Pham Hong**

Faculty of Tourism Studies, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities

336 Nguyen Trai, Thanh Xuan, Hanoi

Vietnam

Tel: +844914914989  
Email: longph@vnu.edu.vn  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2570-2562>  
Web of Science ResearcherID is AAK-2255-2021

Oliver Mtapuri  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal,  
Howard College Campus,  
Private Bag X54001,  
Durban 4000,  
South Africa  
Email: mtapurio@ukzn.ac.za  
Alternative email: simbaomtapuri@yahoo.com  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7698-9482>

Dr. Giampiccoli holds a PhD from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa). He currently is a Research Fellow at Durban University of Technology (Department of Hospitality and Tourism) in Durban, South Africa. His main research interests are related to all aspects of community-based tourism. His other research interests include tourism development theories, alternative tourism, food tourism and sport events.

Pham Hong Long is an associate professor and Dean of the Faculty of Tourism Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University (Hanoi). He is also a visiting professor at Rikkyo University, Japan. He graduated from the Vietnam National University (Vietnam), University of Utara (Malaysia), and holds a PhD from Rikkyo University in Japan. His research areas include ecotourism, community-based tourism, sustainable tourism development, and tourism policies and governance in South-east Asia. He is a leading consultant in sustainable tourism, community-based tourism and ecotourism in protected areas in Vietnam for international organizations such as the British Council Vietnam, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), German Development Agency (GIZ), United National Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and JICA. Long Pham has recently received a research grant from the National Foundation for Science and Technology (NAFOSTED), Vietnam, on value co-creation and destination brand equity. He is a senior policy adviser in tourism planning and development in Vietnam. Email: phamhonglong@gmail.com

Professor Oliver Mtapuri has a PhD in Development studies (University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) and an MBA degree from the University of Zimbabwe. He is an Associate of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators. His areas of research interest include poverty, redistribution and inequality, innovation, community-based tourism, public employment programmes, research methodologies, climate change and project management. Prof Oliver Mtapuri is the Academic Leader of Research in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies at UKZN.

## **Introduction**

As one of the largest global sectors, tourism has recorded consistent growth in revenue and employment (Woo et al., 2018, p. 260). Many countries see tourism as a way to grow their economy (Uzar and Eyuboglu, 2019, p. 822). In 2017 the tourism sector accounted for 313 million jobs and 10.4% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (WTTC, 2018, p. 1) and ranked third in global exports (UNWTO, 2018, p. 6). Tourism can also play a positive role in promoting growth in education, transportation, and infrastructure (Ali, 2018, p. 417). At the same time, the tourism sector has been purported to be alleviating poverty (Scheyvens and Hughes, 2019, p. 1061). Whether or not this is the case “is a big question” (Scheyvens and Hughes, 2019, p. 1061). Poverty and inequality are significant challenges of our times. The distribution of income within nations is hotly debated while inequality is rising in advanced and emerging economies (Derviş and Qureshi, 2016, p. 2). While the level of inequality decreased between the 1920s and 1970s, it has increased across the globe (Alvaredo et al., 2018, p. 68).

The tourism sector is embedded in a neoliberal world system and props up the system through globalization (Lapointe et al., 2018, p. 31). A ‘business as usual’ approach will increase inequality (Alvaredo et al., 2018, p. 13). It is against this background that this article highlights the need to enhance community-based tourism (CBT) as a type of tourism that focuses on disadvantaged members of society. CBT is locally based and controlled and has a redistributive character.

It is rare for a community to start a CBT on its own and that external facilitators such as a non-governmental organization (NGO), a government office, or a tour operator are required as partners (Chaudhary and Lama, 2014, p. 245; Scheyvens, 2002, p. 10). While the government’s role remains fundamental, actors such as the private sector and NGOs can be involved in and facilitate CBT (Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2013, p. 5). In this context, private

firms can act as commercial intermediaries (Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2013, p. 11). This article investigates the potential of a current model of a private company's involvement in CBT to enhance this form of tourism. The case study is based in Vietnam and is founded on an interview with a company representative. The limitation of omitting the community's perspective is acknowledged and could be the focus of future research. While the value and relevance of the community (and a community perspective) in CBT research is accepted, this paper takes the perspective of a private company – which meant that besides using extant secondary data, it also relies to a large extent on information from a private company. Admittedly, this reliance on a private company perspective may 'hide' possible community conditions, characteristics and (dis)agreements in the collaborative framework. The community perspective is usually the most valorized perceptive in CBT papers, we believe that a private company perspective opens up new understandings, vistas and approaches in CBT collaborative frameworks and partnerships. If improving CBT approaches is our final aspiration, given the need for collaborative framework and partnership to better advance CBT, a company perspective gives indications and pointers in this direction. At the end, in the collaborative framework and partnerships between community and private companies, both entities are required. The community should always control, own, manage and benefit from CBT ventures. As such, the community is the protagonist in CBT. At the same time the role of external entities such as private companies should always work within specific parameters and have their limits embedded in the collaborative framework. The final goal is to facilitate CBT that generates holistic community benefits and ensure the independence of CBT entities at the grassroots level. These issues should do not preclude the need to have the private company perceptive as way to better understand the collaboration and partnership in the CBT sector. Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyse, from a private company perspective, a partnership model between the community and a private company.

In terms of methodology, this article is based on a case study of a company, Huong Duong Travel Management Company, which founded Mekong Rustic, a community-based project involved in CBT. This is a critical case study as it illustrates the role a private company can play when working with communities. It is significant because, from this experience, new insights and lessons are learned to inform practice in the tourism sector as a whole. Not much has been covered in the literature regarding the role of private companies being so intimately involved in setting up and supporting the infrastructure of a CBT project in a community to the extent this company went. An interview with a key informant from the private company provided valuable insights into the commercial subventions of this firm in the community. The following section looks at the literature review to anchor the presentation of this case study.

## **Literature Review**

Tourism is an established economic activity in some communities, and its impacts go beyond economic growth and employment creation. Its negative impacts are not well articulated and understood (Kreag, 2001, p. 5). For example, tourism can destroy “the environmental resources on which tourism itself depends” (Agarwal et al., 2019, p. 139; Kreag, 2001, p. 2). It can also lead to reduced subjective well-being in the host community (Dłużewska, 2019). It can negatively impact the economy (Comerio and Strozzi, 2019, p. 110), and its overgrowth affects host communities adversely (Comerio and Strozzi, 2019, p. 112). Conventional/mass tourism does not favor the redistribution of resources in local communities (Saayman and Giampiccoli, 2016, p. 148). In short, tourism has both positive and negative impacts; therefore, any efforts to develop tourism in a community should maximize the positive impacts while diminishing the negative ones (Kreag, 2001, p. 5).

The neoliberal context within which tourism businesses usually function favours trade liberalisation, private sector expansion, and market-led growth against a backdrop of minimum government ‘interference’ in markets (Scheyvens and Hughes, 2019, p. 1065). Neoliberal policies in the least developed countries promote and develop large resorts and changing land use from customary owned land into a commercial traded property, impacting negatively on communities (Tolkach and King, 2015, p. 389). From a sustainable tourism perspective, tourism should go beyond the number of tourists attracted to better serve the broader development goals of local communities, regions, and countries (Guo et al., 2019, p. 9). This calls for the sector not to prioritise profit over the human rights and interests of local communities (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019, p. 6). In this context, adopting CBT principles and characteristics is appropriate for it supports community rights to self-determination and the human rights of the disadvantaged.

Numerous studies have affirmed the need for local community members to be involved in every aspect of tourism development (Nagarjuna, 2015, p. 14). Sustainable socio-economic development can be achieved when local people in host communities enjoy the fruits of tourism through investments and job opportunities that prioritize them (Mogale and Odeku, 2018, p. 10). It is against this background that a recent study (Khamdevi and Bott, 2018, p. 8) on Bali notes that, in light of the negative impacts of mass-based tourism, there was a move to more sustainable CBT (Khamdevi and Bott, 2018, p. 8). Sustainability should be at the heart of CBT because the fruits and benefits of CBT should be enjoyed and transcend current generations. Likewise, the preservations of cultures, heritages, and practices of local people should sustain beyond current generations.

Caution should be exercised when interpreting the existing situation as alternative forms of tourism can be co-opted and influenced by neoliberalism (Duffy, 2015; Fletcher and Neves, 2012; Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2014; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008, 2018; Neth et al.,

2008). Community-based tourism can also be circumscribed and embedded within a neoliberal framework, going against its original principles (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2014, p. 1674). Nonetheless, given the noticeable adverse effects of tourism in many destinations, more responsible and sustainable forms of tourism are required, and CBT has been identified as one such strategy (Agapito and Chan, 2019, p. 1). The following section makes an exposé of CBT. It will then link CBT to a private company.

### ***Community-based tourism***

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of alternative tourism that seeks to engage the host community in the planning, development, and management of tourism. Centering around the principles of social equity and cultural/environmental protection, CBT is seen as having great potential to contribute to the sustainable development of local communities (Scheyvens, 2012). Community-based tourism is currently very widespread (Rey-Bolañosa and López-i-Gelatsa, 2017, p. 527; Wijaya et al., 2020, p. 1) and has gained popularity as a strategy to promote the prosperity of local communities (Dewi et al., 2018, p. 1). Furthermore, there is a link between CBT, community development, and international cooperation in many developing countries (Chaudhary and Lama, 2014, p. 243). The growth of CBT can be associated with a need to promote sustainable tourism, as it is an essential contributor to local economies and a mechanism for sustainable tourism development (Sripun et al., 2017, p. 104; see also Burgos and Mertens, 2017, p. 547). Thriving, empowered, and prosperous local communities are one of the ambitions of CBT. Communities can thrive and prosper if they own and manage their local resources for their benefit in their own way and pursue the kind of development they wish and undertaken at their own pace.

Community-based tourism is a type of so-called alternative tourism that emerged in reaction to the negative impacts of conventional/mass tourism, specifically “against local



people” (Zefnihan, 2018, p. 2). It is regarded as a “counterweight to neo-colonialism, neo-liberalism, and conventional mass tourism” (Tolkach and King, 2015, p. 389), and it is also a strategy to organize communities in order to achieve a better quality of life (Nyakiba et al., 2018, p. 347). The concept of CBT emerged during the discourses of the 1970s linked to issues of empowerment and various participatory development models (Chaudhary and Lama, 2014, p. 242), including social justice, sustainability, self-reliance, and equity (Dangi and Jamal, 2008, p. 12; Giampiccoli and Mtapuri, 2019, p. 4). In the context of redistribution, a vital characteristic recognized in the literature (see, for example, Ndlovu and Rogerson, 2004, p. 446; Singh, 2008, p. 156; Sproule and Suhandi, 1998, p. 216) is that CBT should have direct and indirect beneficiaries. The value of CBT goes beyond economic matters (Han et al., 2019, p. 2), and despite possible differences, it displays common characteristics, with local control being fundamental. Local control is regarded as a strategy to minimize “negative social, cultural, environmental and economic effects can be minimized and further implementation of tourism initiatives will lead to maximization of local benefits” (Teshome et al., 2020, p. 3). Community-based tourism emphasizes self-management equitable distribution of income into the community for community development (Ninaroon et al., 2020, p. 88). It thus shows the significance of community ownership and empowerment in tourism development that is a necessary condition for community growth (Abdul Razzaq et al., 2012, p. 10). Local control and ownership remain are fundamental principles that nurture and induce long-term perspectives and functionality prospects of CBT projects (Tamir, 2015, p. 70). Locals must control and manage their resources in their best interests and that of their community (Thorndal-Debes, 2013, p. 6). Economic benefits to local communities are linked to the degree of direct control which local people have over their institutions and ventures (Faulkenberry et al., 2000, p. 87).

This is not to suggest that CBT is free from limitations and challenges (Saayman and Giampiccoli, 2016, p. 149). Indeed, if not correctly implemented, it can cause severe community problems (Suansri, 2003, p. 7). While community empowerment and participation are essential, it is urged that one of CBT's principles encourages development through the use of the local community's goods and resources, which are locally controlled, driven by the community, and primarily community-based (Dangi and Jamal, 2016, p. 10), in circumstances where disadvantaged community members often lack the skills and resources to independently implement CBT, calling for external facilitation (Ruiz-Ballesteros and Cáceres-Feria 2016). If properly established and managed, partnerships with external entities can be fruitful (Saayman and Giampiccoli, 2016). For example, facilitation of capacity building is regarded as essential (Bittar Rodrigues and Prideaux, 2018, p. 12). However, problems can arise when external entities adopt a top-down implementation approach (Sakata and Prideaux, 2013, p. 882). Unfortunately, the blame for CBT project failure is commonly attributed to the community (de Beer and Marais, 2005, p. 55; Pleumaron, 2002). Top-down implementation approaches may be silently rejected through discreet withdrawal by communities. Communities must also be united with a common and shared vision undergirded by social cohesion for their CBT projects to bear fruit. In other words, there are underlying conditions necessary for the successful implementation of CBT projects, such as incontrovertible social cohesion.

While the role of private companies such as tour operators in enhancing CBT is acknowledged, there is a need to impose limits and conditions concerning their involvement. In any CBT, external entities should never own the CBT entity. Facilitators can assist in various technical matters, skills development, marketing, and so on "but should not be partners in the CBT ventures themselves" (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2018, p. 761). More specifically, it is necessary to enter into partnerships that facilitate skills development, the

empowerment of community members, and capacity building of communities in CBT management and development (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2018, p. 761). Within this context, partnerships enable CBT to grow because the facilitation of intermediaries such as government, the private sector, and NGOs is crucial for communities to manifest their needs, expectations, and goals (Akbar and Nurpita, 2019, p. 135).

Furthermore, external facilitators should not focus solely on tourism-related matters but encompass issues for holistic well-being. For instance, skills development should be comprehensive to be valuable beyond CBT for general individual and community development (Hainsworth, 2009, p. 113; Hamzah and Khalifah, 2009, p. 59; Mitchell and Ashely, 2010, p. 23; Moscardo, 2008, p. 174; Saayman and Giampiccoli, 2016, p. 152; Twining-Ward, 2007, p. 14). Therefore, the community development process should include aspects of empowerment, capacity building, and ownership of ventures by communities to take charge of their destinies (de Beer and Marais, 2005, p. 59). As noted by Thorndal-Debes, capacity development and the empowerment process it entails are the primary means and goals of CBT. This leads to communities and individuals more capable of seizing new opportunities and of making more of the opportunities they already have [...] It is important to note that capacity development is so much more than training and skill-building; in this case, the emphasis of capacity development is more on the human development process that the community members go through by conducting CBT (Thorndal-Debes, 2013, p. 12).

In CBT, fruitful local capacity development is an essential outcome when tourism ventures are under local control (Twining-Ward, 2007, p. 14). Capacity-building should thus be seen as a necessary pre-condition in implementing practical projects (Suansri, 2003, p. 12). The following section introduces the case study from Vietnam.

## **A model for a private company-CBT relationship in Vietnam**

In Vietnam, CBTs emerged as early as the 1990s (e.g., Lác Village of Mai Châu District, Hòa Bình province, Cát Cát Village of Sa Pa District, Lào Cai Province) and continued to expand rapidly since 2000 as part of the national and global poverty alleviation strategies (Phi & Whitford, 2017). As of 2020, there exist hundreds of CBTs throughout the three regions of Việt Nam (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2020). Despite this rapid growth, most Vietnamese CBTs still face a wide range of challenges, for example, awareness, marketing, funding, profit distribution, and capacity development, to achieve short and long-term sustainability. Concurrently, some CBTs have reported initial success, and opportunities exist in the broader environment to replicate these successes elsewhere.

This section focuses on a private company's (Mekong Rustic, after that MR) involvement in CBT in Vietnam. Mekong Rustic "is a community-based project founded by Huong Duong Travel Management Company..." (Mekong Rustic, no date, p. 2). It is "a community-based project built based on cooperation, training and investment" in the Mekong Delta (Mekong Rustic, no date, p. 2). The company acts as a facilitator and assistant in CBT development. Figure 1 shows the MR-CBT model illustrating its involvement, which is variegated in CBT and demonstrating that its involvement goes beyond the provision of funding. Thus, MR is involved in:

- Establishing the network of families/households involved in CBT;
- Assisting families/households to establish/register their family businesses (Each CBT entity is a legally registered business);
- Helping to improve CBT facilities, products, and services;
- Skills development;
- Marketing and taking tourists to CBT ventures;

- Establishing links with other tour operators and NGOs that contribute to CBT/community development by, for example, bring volunteers to assist with development projects;
- Contributing to community-wide development projects such as improvements to local schools (5% of MR's net profit is used for community development projects).

Assistance to legally registered CBT ventures is recognized as very important as it enables family businesses to enter the more formal tourism sector. This will build individual businesses and, more generally, enhance the image and value of CBT among tourists, the tourism industry, tourism organizations, and the government. 'Formalization' thus enables the recognition of CBT enterprises as comparable to any other formal tourism businesses (with its specific principles and characteristics) rather than – as is often the case (and also possibly regarded with a biased view) – as a secondary and inherently low level, cheap type of tourism.

Importantly, MR facilitates the involvement of NGOs and tour operators that contribute to CBT/community development in the specific localities where they work. This has a multiplier effect on the entities in a specific area and enhances development opportunities. As a private company, MR aims to make a profit; 5% of its net profit is used for community-wide development projects, specifically local schools. The company thus focuses on households and the community rather than individuals. This is in line with CBT principles that seek to go beyond the individual and involve as many people as possible. Mekong Rustic benefits all households participating in the project (and not individuals), and it supports local communities and entities that promote sustainable tourism in the area (Mekong Rustic, no date, p. 2). It also promotes skills development, which is a fundamental issue in CBT through training sessions that specializes in tour-guide skills, homestay, product and services knowledge, on-board services, and matters related to Food and Beverages

(Mekong Rusting, no date, p. 2). The company envisages that such training will go beyond strictly tourism issues and serve community members in other aspects of their lives.

However, the CBT ventures in the MR-CBT model cannot be regarded as fully developed CBT. Firstly, the CBT entities seem to work independently from one another, although they are all linked to MR. Secondly, the entities themselves do not seem to be directly involved in redistributive measures; MR undertakes this. While the role and actions of MR are undoubtedly positive, to be fully categorized as CBT, the various CBT entities should work cooperatively (ideally by having a common umbrella organization) independently from the private company that would, however, continue to cooperate with them. Despite these issues, the MR-CBT model can be regarded as a positive one that could facilitate the growth of CBT. Within its possible limitations, the MR-CBT model is comprehensive and moving in the right direction in showing its capacity to empower others in a virtuous fashion.

Two other relevant issues in the MR-CBT model are MR's involvement in improving CBT facilities and marketing and bringing tourists to the CBT ventures. While its role as tour operator (marketing and bringing tourists to CBT ventures) is obvious, its involvement in improving CBT facilities is significant. Local economically disadvantaged community members usually lack financial resources to improve tourism facilities; therefore, external assistance is valuable and fundamental in ensuring that the CBT facilities are of the satisfactory standard expected by visitors. Figure 1 below shows diagrammatically the model of Mekong Rustic and its involvement in CBT.

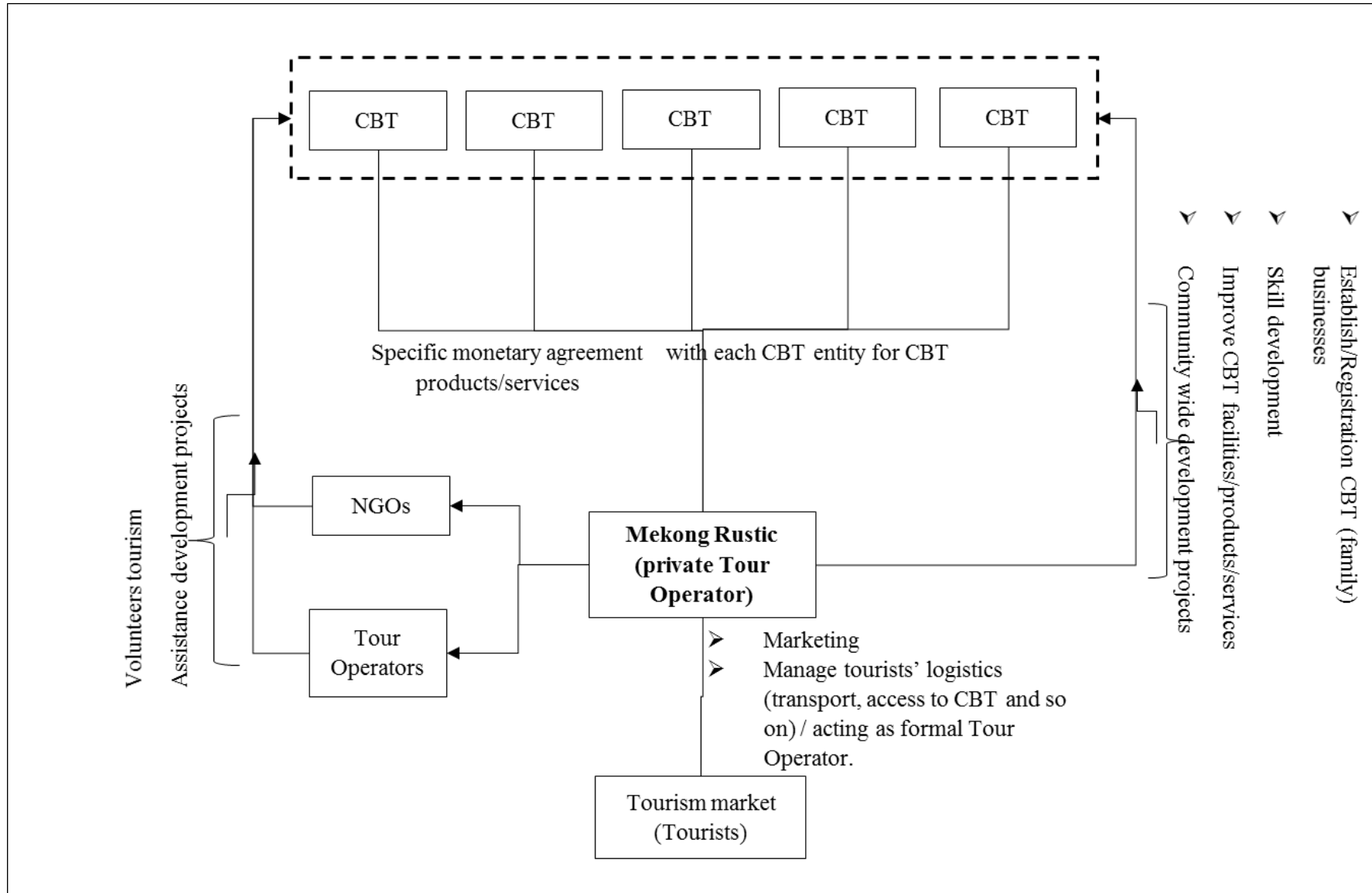


Figure 1: Model of Mekong Rustic's involvement in CBT. Elaborated from the MDMR interview

As noted above, the quality of CBT facilities is critical in growing and enhancing CBT and transforming its image from a secondary, low level, and cheap tourism to a more ‘normal’ tourism image. Thus, MR’s role in improving CBT facilities is fundamental not just for each venture but for the general image and value associated with CBT. While CBT should go beyond monetary aspects, the economic aspect remains a vital issue. As part of its *modus operandi*, Mekong Rustic reaches an agreement with each CBT entity, paying them for each specific tourist service. In the current MR-CBT model, this solution seems appropriate and, probably, the only option. This is possible in an atmosphere characterized by trust, commonality of goals and expectation, and, importantly, social cohesion.

However, fully independent CBT ventures that work within a cooperative framework should always be the final goal. Given that CBT, especially in its initial stages, usually requires facilitators and/or partners, the MR-CBT model can be seen as a positive example that facilitates both CBT development and community development. What is evident is that it could guide CBT ventures to gradually become more independent and eventually be fully independent. In this context, it opens up possibilities for the scaling-up of the MR-CBT model in favorable and similar circumstances. It is important to note that the independence of CBT entities does not mean that cooperation between MR and the various CBT ventures should not continue in the long term. Cooperation is a necessary condition. The relationship should continue within a new context where CBT ventures are more ‘equal partners’ rather than ‘assisted partners.’ This distinction is crucial because “the arrangement is fundamentally different from a situation in which the community is coerced into a partnership” (see Mtapuri and Giampiccoli, 2013, p. 9). The company’s commitment to business formalization, skills development, and improvement of CBT facilities could also promote the CBT venture’s independence and possibly opens emancipatory chances that mainstream CBT in this specific territory.



## **Discussion**

While private company-CBT partnership models should always be appropriately established and managed and should have their specific conditions, the MR-CBT model (although it has its limitations) moves in the right direction. Thus, the MR-CBT model can be regarded as a positive example of a relationship between the private sector and CBT entities. Thus, given the fundamental and leading role (that should be) played by the government in CBT development, MR, which already has a positive relationship with CBT entities, could work with the government (that should remain the primary responsible entity) to formulate and implement specific classifications, legislation and indexes related to CBT and ultimately establish a new official entity to supervise and coordinate CBT nationally or in a specific geographical area. The MR-CBT model will be scaled up, or other private companies will be encouraged to adopt similar models. Cascading such a model creates win-win and mutually beneficial arrangements that spread the more significant benefits to greater numbers of people to fight poverty and inequality.

Tourism is a leading global economic sector, and its potential for development should not be underestimated. However, the current approach to tourism development is based on conventional tourism and alternative tourism forms, which often remain neoliberal-friendly. This hampers the sectors' ability to deliver its full potential in development and has many adverse effects on localities and communities. Given rising inequality across the world, the tourism sector should aim to contribute to fighting this scourge. Instead, the mainstream tourism approach has been seen to exacerbate the situation.

The lessons learned from this case study are that firms can nurture networks of families/households for participation in CBT. They can also assist families in registering their family businesses. They can help to improve CBT facilities, products, and services in the community. Firms can also support interventions that target skills development for the benefit

of disadvantaged community members. Firms can also assist in marketing and taking tourists to CBT facilities. They can also link the community to other tour operators and NGOs (especially those involved in community development initiatives). These are some of the cardinal lessons learned from this case study. These lessons are the key contributions of this article for practice and policy – allowing companies to revisit their current practices and policies in light of these revelations. A limitation of the methodology used is that it is based on a single case study. However, the results are illuminating.

## **Conclusion**

Community-based tourism is regarded as a viable alternative to mainstream tourism. However, most CBT initiatives require external assistance. Government entities, NGOs, and the private sector can serve as CBT facilitators. This article suggests that, while the role of government remains fundamental, the private sector can positively contribute to CBT, as seen in the case study presented in this article. The MR-CBT model's 'multi-facilitative approach' goes beyond economic issues to offer an array of assistance such as improving CBT facilities and skills development. Bearing in mind that fully independent CBT ventures should always be the final goal and that the MR-CBT model can be improved and developed, it represents a positive model that favors CBT. Future challenges include scaling up the MR-CBT model (or other private companies following the same model) and establishing a relationship between government entities and companies such as MR to work cooperatively to enhance and grow CBT.

## **Acknowledgment**

This article is also a product of the authors' participation in the International Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development: Lessons Learned for South East Asian Countries held from 3rd to 4th December 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam. The first author thanks the

Faculty of Tourism, Vietnam National University, University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Hanoi for its hospitality, and the Durban University of Technology for awarding him funding through the Academic Exchange/Mobility Grant for his travel and stay in Vietnam.

## References

- Abdul Razzaq, A. R., Zaid Mustafa, M., Suradin, A., Hassan, R., Hamzah, A. & Khalifah, Z. (2012). Community Capacity Building for Sustainable Tourism Development: Experience from Miso Walai Homestay. *Business and Management Review*, 2(5), 10-19.
- Agapito, D. & Chan, C-S. (2019). A multisensory approach to responsible management in community-based tourism: a case study in Hong Kong. *Journal of Tourism Quarterly*, 1(1), 1-13.
- Agarwal, R., Kariyapol, T. & Pienchob, N. (2019). Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism on Environment: A Case Study of Pattaya City, Thailand. *Sripatum Review of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19(1), 136-147.
- Akbar, S. I. & Nurpita, A. (2019). Potential Partnership of Community-Based Management in Supporting the Utilization of Sustainable Resources in Indonesian Coastal Tourism. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 132, 134-138. (6th Annual International Conference on Management Research (AICMaR 2019).
- Alvaredo, F., Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (Eds.). (2018). *World inequality report 2018*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bittar Rodrigues, C. & Prideaux, B. (2018). A management model to assist local communities developing community-based tourism ventures: a case study from the Brazilian Amazon. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 17(1), 1-19.
- Burgos, A. & Mertens, F. (2017). Participatory management of community-based tourism: A network perspective. *Community Development*, 48(4), 546-565.
- Chaudhary, M. & Lama, R. (2014). Community Based Tourism Development in Sikkim of India – A Study of Darap and Pastanga Villages. *Transnational Corporations Review*, 6(3), 228-237.
- Comerio, N. & Strozzi, F. (2019). Tourism and its economic impact: A literature review using bibliometric tools. *Tourism Economics*, 25(1), 109-131.
- Dangi, T. B. & Jamal, T. (2016). An Integrated Approach to “Sustainable Community-Based Tourism”. *Sustainability*, 8(475), 1-32.
- de Beer F. & Marais, M. (2005). Rural communities, the natural environment and development –some challenges, some successes. *Community Development Journal*, 40(1), 50-61.
- Derviş, K. & Qureshi, Z. (2016). Income distribution within countries: rising inequality. *Global Economy and Development at Brookings*. Available at: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/income-inequality-within-countries\\_august-2016-003.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/income-inequality-within-countries_august-2016-003.pdf) [accessed 7 October 2019].
- Dewi, N.I., Astawa, I.P., Siwantara, I.W. & Mataram, I.G. (2018). Exploring the potential of cultural villages as a model of community based tourism. *The 2nd International Joint*

- Conference on Science and Technology (IJCST). IOP Conf. Series: Journal of Physics: Conf. Series, 953.
- Dłużewska, A. M. (2019). Well-being versus sustainable development in tourism—The host perspective. *Sustainable Development*, 27(3), 512-522.
- Duffy, R. (2015). Nature-based tourism and neoliberalism: concealing contradictions. *Tourism Geographies*, 17 (4), 529-543.
- Faulkenberry, L.V., Coggeshall, J.M., Backman, K. & Backman, S. (2000). A Culture of Servitude. The Impact of Tourism and Development on South Carolina's Coast. *Human Organization*, 59(1), 86-95.
- Fletcher, R. & Neves, K. (2012). Contradictions in Tourism. The Promise and Pitfalls of Ecotourism as a Manifold Capitalist Fix 2012. *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*, 3, 60–77.
- Giampiccoli, A. & Mtapuri, O. (2019). Conceptualising the Contribution of Community-Based Tourism to Social Justice and Self-Determination. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(1): 1-14.
- Giampiccoli, A. & Saayman, M. (2018). South African community-based tourism operational guidelines: Analysis and critical review. *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 10(6), 759-770.
- Giampiccoli, A. & Saayman, M. (2014). A Conceptualisation of Alternative Forms of Tourism in Relation to Community Development. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(27), 1667-1677.
- Guo, Y., Jiang, J. & Li, S. (2019). A Sustainable Tourism Policy Research Review. *Sustainability*, 11(3187), 1-16.
- Hainsworth, D. (2009). Community Tourism and Broad-based Local Development: The Case of Doi Village, Thua Then province, Vietnam. In B. A. O. Jigang (Ed.) *Tourism and community development*. Asian Practices, pp. 121-134 (Madrid: World Tourism organization).
- Hamzah A. & Khalifah, Z. (2009). *Handbook on Community Based Tourism “How to Develop and Sustain CBT”*. Singapore: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Secretariat.
- Han, H., Eom, T., Al-Ansi, A., Ryu, HB. & Kim, W. (2019). Community-Based Tourism as a Sustainable Direction in Destination Development: An Empirical Examination of Visitor Behaviors. *Sustainability*, 11(10), 1-14.
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2008). Justice tourism and alternative globalisation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(3), 345-364.
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F., Carnicelli, S., Krolikowski, C., Wijesinghe, G. & Boluk, K. (2019). Degrowing tourism: rethinking tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2019.1601732
- Khamdevi, M. & Bott, H. (2018). Rethinking tourism: Bali's failure. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 126, 1-10.
- Kreag, G. 2001. *The Impacts of Tourism*. Sea Grant, University of Minnesota. Retrieved 2 October 2019 from <http://www.seagrant.umn.edu/tourism/pdfs/ImpactsTourism.pdf>
- Lapointe, D., Sarrasin, B. & Benjamin, C. (2018). Tourism in the sustained hegemonic neoliberal order. *Revista Latino Americana De Turismologia*, 4(1), 16-33.
- Mekong Rustic (no date). *Mekong Rustic Profile*. Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/168uuuVYL8YDTyCnER\\_fw6MQSTxUi6L9E/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/168uuuVYL8YDTyCnER_fw6MQSTxUi6L9E/view) [accessed 26 November 2019].
- Mitchell, J. & Ashley, C. (2010). *Tourism and poverty reduction. Pathways to prosperity*. London: Earthscan.

- Mogale, P. T. & Odeku, K. O. (2018). Transformative tourism legislation: an impetus for socioeconomic development in South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 7(3): 1-16.
- Moscardo G. (2008). Building community capacity for tourism development: conclusion. In G. Moscardo (Ed.) *Building community capacity for tourism development*, pp. 172-179 (Wallingford: CAB International).
- Mtapuri, O. & Giampiccoli, A. (2013). Interrogating the role of the state and nonstate actors in community-based tourism ventures: toward a model for spreading the benefits to the wider community. *South African Geographical Journal*, 95:1, 1-15
- Mtapuri, O. & Giampiccoli, A. (2016). A conceptual coalescence: Towards Luxury Community-based Tourism. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 6(3), 1-14.
- Nagarjuna, G. (2015). Local Community Involvement in Tourism: A Content Analysis of Websites of Wildlife Resorts. *Atna, Journal of Tourism Studies*, 10(1), 13-21.
- Ndlovu, N. & Rogerson, C. M. (2004). The local economic impacts of rural community-based tourism in Eastern Cape. In C. M. Rogerson & G. Visser (Eds.) *Tourism and development issues in contemporary South Africa*, pp. 436-451 (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa).
- Neth, B., Rith, S. & Knerr, B. (2008). Global environmental governance and politics of ecotourism: case study of Cambodia. Paper presented at 12th EADI General Conference. Global governance for sustainable development. The need for policy coherence and new partnerships. Geneva, 24-28 June 2008.
- Ninaroon, P., Songkhla, R. N. & Pruksaarporn, S. (2020). A conceptual framework for the antecedent and consequent of happiness in community-based tourism enterprise. The 2020 International Academic Multidisciplinary Research Conference in Switzerland. Available at:  
<http://icbtsproceeding.ssrui.ac.th/index.php/ICBTSSWITZERLAND2020/article/view/431/425> [accessed 26 May 2020].
- Nyakiba, P. N., Nason, V. & Onchieku, J. (2018). The effectiveness of the community driven programs on the growth of local based tourism in Amboseli ecosystem, Narok County, Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, 2(5), 345-354.
- Phi, G. T., Whitford, M. & Dredge, D. (2017). Knowledge dynamics in the tourism-social entrepreneurship nexus. In P. Sheldon & D. Roberto (Eds.) *Social entrepreneurship and tourism: philosophy and practice*, pp. 155-172 (Cham: Springer).
- Pleumaron, A. (2002). Community-Based Ecotourism: Miracle or Menace? Paper presented to the IYE Regional Conference on Community-Based Ecotourism in Southeast Asia, Chiang Mai/Thailand, 3-7 March 2002.
- Rey-Bolaños, M. A. & López-i-Gelats, F. (2017). What drives the vulnerability of rural communities involved in community-based tourism to global environmental change? A metaanalysis of vulnerability pathways based on case study evidence. *Xi congreso de la asociación española de economía agraria. Sistemas alimentarios y cambio global desde el mediterráneo orihuela-elche*, 13-15 septiembre de 2017, pp. 527-530.
- Ruiz-Ballesteros, E. & Cáceres-Feria, R. (2016). Community-building and Amenity Migration in Community-Based Tourism Development. An Approach from Southwest Spain. *Tourism Management*, 54: 513– 523.
- Saayman, M. & Giampiccoli, A. (2016). Community-based and pro-poor tourism: Initial assessment of their relation to community development. *European Journal of Tourism Research* 12, 145-190.

- Sakata, H. & Prideaux, B. (2013). An alternative approach to community-based ecotourism: a bottom-up locally initiated non-monetised project in Papua New Guinea. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(6), 880-899.
- Scheyvens, R. & Hughes, E. (2019). Can tourism help to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”? The challenge of tourism addressing SDG1. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(7), 1061-1079.
- Scheyvens, R. (2012). *Tourism and Poverty*. New York: Routledge.
- Scheyvens, R. (2002). *Tourism for development empowering community*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Singh, L. K. (2008). *Ecology, Environment and Tourism*. Delhi: ESHA Books.
- Sproule, K.W. & Suhandi, A.S. (1998). Guidelines for community-based ecotourism programs: lessons from Indonesia. In K. Lindberg, M. Epler Wood, D. Engeldrum, (Eds.) *Ecotourism: a Guide for Planners and Managers (Volume 2)*, pp. 215-235 (North Bennington: The Ecotourism Society).
- Sripun, M., Yongvanit, S. & Pratt, R. (2017). Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency of Community-Based Tourism Stakeholders in Northeastern Thailand. *Asian Social Science*, 13(4), 104-116.
- Suansri P. (2003). *Community Based Tourism Handbook*. Bangkok: Responsible Ecological Social Tour (REST).
- Tamir, M. (2015). Challenges and opportunities of community based tourism development in awi zone: A case study in Guagusa and Banja Woredas, Ethiopia. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Sports*, 11, 50–78.
- Teshome, E., Shita, F. & Abebe, F. (2020). Current community based ecotourism practices in Menz Guassa community conservation area, Ethiopia. *GeoJournal*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10179-3>
- Thorndal-Debes, L. L. (2013). Capacity Development in Community Based Tourism. The International Conference on International Relations and Development (ICIRD), on 22-23 August 2013 at the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University. Available at: [http://www.icird.com/publications?task=file&action=download&path=\[DIR\\_PUBLICATIONS\\_PAPER\]/04\\_laerke-thorndal-debes\\_fullpaper.pdf](http://www.icird.com/publications?task=file&action=download&path=[DIR_PUBLICATIONS_PAPER]/04_laerke-thorndal-debes_fullpaper.pdf) [accessed 26 May 2020].
- Tolkach, D. & King, B. (2015). Strengthening community-based tourism in a new resource-based island nation: why and how? *Tourism management*, 48:386-398.
- Twining-Ward, L. (2007). *A Toolkit for Monitoring and Managing Community-based Tourism*. Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and University of Hawaii, School of Travel Industry Management.
- Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2020. *Tourism Statistics*. Available at: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/english/> [accessed 2 May 2021].
- UNWTO (2018). *Tourism Highlights, 2018 Edition*. Madrid: World Tourism Organisation.
- Uzar, U. & Eyuboglu, K. (2019). Can tourism be a key sector in reducing income inequality? An empirical investigation for Turkey. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(8), 822-838.
- Wijaya, P. Y., Hartati, P. S. & Sumadi, N. K. (2020). The Readiness of Community Based Tourism Village Development (Case Study at Bongkasa Pertiwi Tourism Village, Bali Province, Indonesia). *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 5(3), 1-5.
- Woo, E., Uysal, M. & Sirgy, M. J. (2018). Tourism impact and stakeholders' quality of life. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(2), 260-286.

- WTTC (2018). Power & Performance Rankings. London: World Travel & Tourism Council.  
<https://lopezdoriga.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/power-and-performance-rankings-2018.pdf> [accessed 5 May 2021].
- Zefnihan Z. A. (2018). Community-based tourism development viewed from economic, social culture and environment aspects in Mandeh's integrated marine tourism area. MATEC Web of Conference, 229, 01006.  
[https://doi.org/10.1051.mateconf/201822901006](https://doi.org/10.1051/mateconf/201822901006)