

# Community Based Sustainable Tourism and Its Impact on Socio-Economic Development of Phobjikha Valley

## Abstract

This paper aims to assess the Impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism development in Phobjikha Valley in Wangduephodrang district, Bhutan. This paper considers the impact of CBST from the perspective of local people in two development aspects: economic, and sociocultural. In addition, this paper explores the perspective of the local people to support the initiation of Community-Based Sustainable Tourism in the valley of Phobjikha, through their views on the Challenges that are brought by it and the effort they put in to overcome those challenges through different means of Interventions. This paper employed mixed methods, and the data were collected through Field survey questionnaire, survey interviews, and two FGDs. This paper found that CBST has brought positive economic and socio-cultural impact, while in other aspects, it produces negative impacts such as environmental damage due to inadequate management of waste. Therefore, this paper proposes the application of collaborative strategy between community, local government, and tourism business actors in order to develop community-based sustainable tourism in Phobjikha valley.

## *Key Words*

Community-Based Sustainable Tourism, Phobjikha Valley, Community, Foreign Tourists, Domestic Tourists, Social Impacts, Economic Impacts, Sustainable Development, Challenges, Interventions.



# INTRODUCTION

## Background to the study

Tourism is defined as the activities of people who travel to and stay in places outside their typical surroundings for less than a year for leisure, business, or other objectives (World Tourism Organization, 2020). Tourism is considered an effective method of reducing poverty in some traditional communities because tourism provides different jobs than traditional livelihoods as well as opportunities to sell local products (Croes, 2014).

Bhutan has constantly gained international exposure since it first opened to tourism in 1974 (Royal Society for Protection of Nature, 2013). The relatively pristine ecosystem, rich cultural heritage and the development philosophy of pursuing Gross National Happiness (GNH) has generated immense interest among people around the world to visit Bhutan. This attraction is further supplemented by the Royal Government's Policies to promote 'High Value Low Impact' tourism, the marketing initiatives of tour operators, and increasing carrying capacity in the form of improved tourism facilities and services (RSPN, 2013).

To bring the direct benefits of Tourism on the local people of a community, tourism initiated a program called as Community Based Sustainable Tourism. Community Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) is defined as a method of development in which local communities' social, environmental, and economic needs are met through the provision of a tourism product, with the vast majority of community-based tourism enterprises based on the development of community-owned and managed lodges or homestays. In other words, local communities make decisions and have the authority to manage their own products for the benefit of current and future tourists (Nor, 2012).

Community Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) has been widely identified for its ability to improve local economies, and it has been introduced in many countries including Bhutan. Community-based ecotourism promotes decentralization of power to communities and allows communities to be part and parcel of both the development and management of the tourism sector which leads to an improved sense of belongingness and reduction of undesirable outflows of tourism revenue from the local economy (Wondirad, 2019).

Consequently, Croes (2014) asserted that the traditional communities, such as rural communities could develop Community Based Tourism to improve their economic status. Phobjikha valley of Wangduephodrang district which comprises of two Geogs; Gangtey and Phobji is popularly known for its ecological significance and the harmonious co-existence of humans and nature (RSPN, 2013). The valley is also a home to over five thousand people; its panoramic landscape and wildlife attract an increasing number of national and international visitors every year (Royal Society for Protection of Nature, 2019).

Kontogeorgopoulos et al (2015) claims that many countries use natural and rural areas as a pull strategy to attract tourists. However, local people in general do not have enough information, resources, and strength to use tourism as a development strategy to uplift the economic standard of the rural community through Community Based Sustainable Tourism (Sutresna et al., 2019).

The Community Based Sustainable Tourism programme was designed to bridge the gap between conservation efforts and potential benefits. The objectives of the programme are to: Contribute to enhancement of livelihoods of the local people through sustainable tourism initiatives and Contribute to preservation of the local natural and cultural heritage of Phobjikha valley (RSPN, 2019).

This chapter provides an overview of the study covering the statement of the problem, aim and objectives, research questions, study area, significance of study, and structure of the dissertation.

## **Statement of problem**

The impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development in Phobjikha is unknown. Yet there are several studies carried out around the world that says Community Based Sustainable Tourism plays a critical role in the development and progress of all countries, particularly developing ones, and has a broad positive impact on the target country's economic and social conditions (Dubey, 2014). Further, there is no data on the impact of community based on socio-economic development but Royal Monetary Authority (2021) states that Bhutan generate 4.83 USD Million from 2009 till 2021, reaching an all-time high of 17.30 USD Million in November of 2018 and a record low of 0 USD Million in April, 2020. However, the Community Based Sustainable Tourism which was implemented in Phobjikha on a controlled basis complying with the “high value low impact” policy adopted in 1974. There is no such findings which provide an in-depth analysis of the governance of the Phobjikha valley with a particular focus on the operation of the Community Based Sustainable Tourism, its impact on the socio –economic development of the community as a whole (Rinzin et al., 2008). The image of tourism is based on the assets of the local community, including not only the local people but also the natural environment, infrastructure, facilities and special events or festivals (Kontogeorgopoulou & Churyen., 2015). Phobjikha valley is not only rich in its beautiful natural resources which invites tourism but also it has seen the development of their community in terms of infrastructure and facilities brought about by it. The community on the other hand, have had been a part of all those changes yet their perception on the establishment of Community Based Sustainable Tourism in their community and the impacts it brought along were never studied.

Therefore, this study aims to explore; first, community’s perception on CBST, second, the significant social and economic impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on local community and third, the challenges and Interventions taken up by the local community for combatting the Community Based Sustainable Tourism effect (Gnanapalab et. al., 2015).

## **Aim and objectives**

### **Aim**

This study aims to explore the perception and the Impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development of Phobjikha Valley.

### **Objectives**

1. Evaluate the perception of residents toward Community Based Tourism.
2. Assess the social and economic impacts of Community Based Tourism on Phobjikha Valley.
3. Identify the challenges faced by the residents in implementing Community Based Tourism in the valley.
4. Identify the Intervention strategies adopted by the Community in contending the challenges brought by Community Based Sustainable Tourism.

## **Research questions**

### **Primary question**

Q. What is the impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on the Socio-Economic Development of Phobjikha Valley?

### **Sub-research questions**

1. How do residents perceive the impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on the socio-economic development of their community?
2. What are some of the social and economic impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism?
3. What are some of the challenges faced by the residents in carrying out Community Based Sustainable Tourism in the community?

4. What are some intervention strategies adopted by the community to contend the challenges of Community Based Sustainable Tourism?

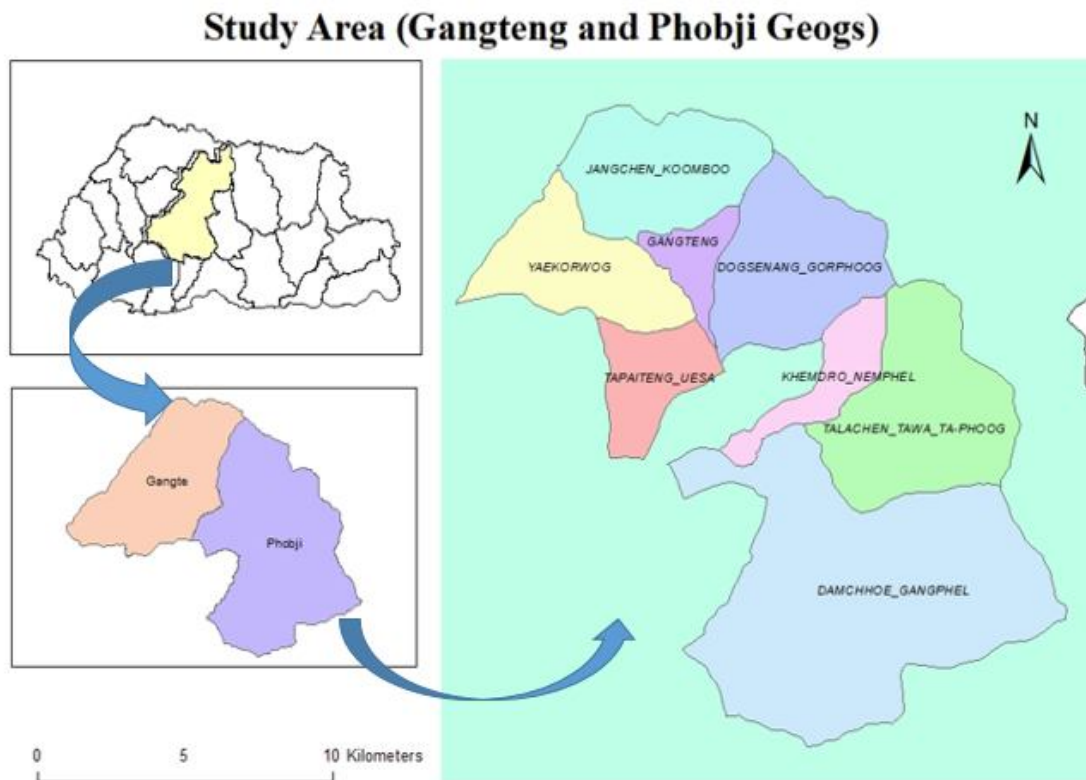
### **Study area**

The study was carried out in Phobjikha valley, the largest wetland in Bhutan. The site covers an area of 975 hectares, and has been enlisted as a Ramsar site from May 2014. Wetlands are considered among the most productive ecosystems as they are a repository of rich biodiversity (RSPN, 2017). Besides this significance, Phobjikha is prominently known for the Black Necked Cranes. An average of over 400 cranes resides in Phobjikha for the winter months, which is the largest winter nonbreeding habitat outside China. Located at an altitude range of 2900 meters the climatic conditions. Potatoes are the main agricultural crop that the local farmers rely on for their livelihood. Tourism development in Phobjikha has been emerging rapidly due to its attractive landscape and habitat for the Black-necked cranes.

The study area was chosen on the basis of where the Community Based Sustainable Tourism was established and is operative. Community Based Sustainable Tourism operates in two Geogs, Phobji and Gangteng, covering an area of 975 Hectares with population of 5, 387 under Wangduephodrang district (RSPN, 2019). These Geogs were further divided into 8 Chiwogs; 1. Jangchey\_Kumboo, 2. Gangteng, 3. Yaekorwog, 4. Dogsenang\_Gorphoog, 5. Tapaiteng\_Uesa under GangtengGeog, and 1. Khemdro\_Nemphel, 2. 3. Talachen\_Tawa\_Taphoog, 4. Damchoe\_Gangphel under PhobjiGeog, particularly for the study as shown in the Figure 1 below.

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Figure 1. Study Area



Source: Author (2022)

### Significance of the study

This study will help:

- Inform community members about the mechanisms that can be considered to secure sustainable socio-economic development in the valley through Community Based Tourism. Offer important information for community-based tourism planners and practitioners on community-based sustainable tourism in the Phobjikha valley.
- Provide information about problems related to Community based tourism to local government, RSPN and the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) at large for further improvement in planning.
- Provide an understanding of the short- and long-term effects of development adjustment, which in turn may make crucial policy information and strategies available to enhance the sustainable development of the community to the concerned Ministries

### Limitations of the study

The following challenges were faced during the course of the study:

Covid 19 Lockdown and Protocol Restriction, Covid 19 outbreak in WangduePhodrang district and its strict protocol restriction led to many inconveniences in the data collection process. The approval seeking from the Dzongkhag and Gewog administrations were prolonged and restricted which ultimately resulted in a delayed data collection process.

Language barrier caused gaps in getting correct information regarding the study, thus, hampering the translation of data.

There are numerous literature pertaining to the current research topic, however, the researcher could not find much studies done in Bhutan. Lack of literature in Bhutanese context was one of the major limitations.

### **Outline of the dissertation**

This dissertation comprises five chapters.

Chapter 1 of this research presents a general instruction statement of problem aim and objectives research questions study area significance and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 of this study presents a literature review on teachers to improve.

Chapter 3 prisms methodology of this study. The areas covert under methodology include research paradigm research design conceptual framework quantitative and qualitative sampling strategies and sample size quantitative and qualitative data collection tools reliability and validity trustworthiness quantitative and qualitative data analysis what's the triangulation and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study followed by discussions. For each research question, the results are first presented and subsequently discussed. For the mixed methods research questions, the quantitative results were first presented followed by qualitative results and discussions. Chapter five presents the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

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# LITERATURE REVIEW

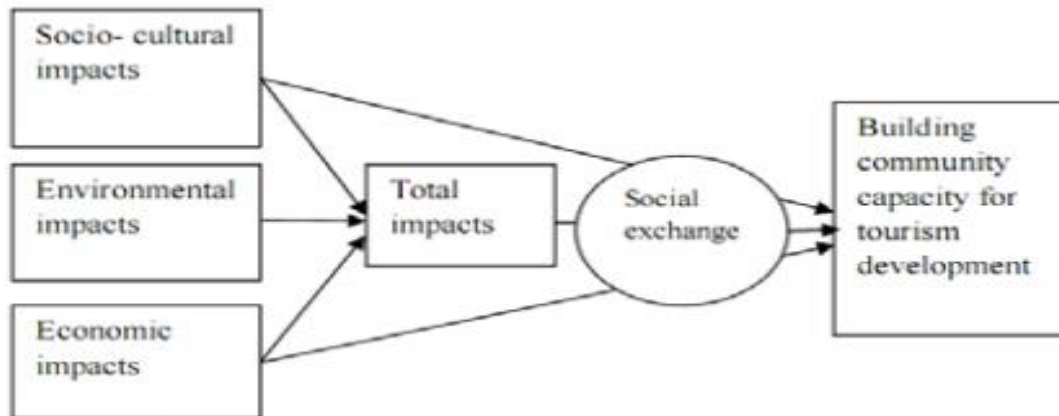
## Introduction

This chapter discusses relevant literature in five parts. The five parts include: The Theoretical Framework, Perception of Community Based Sustainable Tourism, Impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on the Socio-Economic Development of the Phobjikha community, Challenges of executing Community Based Sustainable Tourism, Intervention Strategies adapted to operate sustainable Community Based Tourism in the valley.

## Theoretical Framework

A number of pertinent theories are available to choose from when discussing the socio-economic impact of tourism on a community (Doe et al., 2021). Theories which researchers have used over time include Social Identity Theory (Maruyama&Woosnam, 2015), the social representations theory, social development theory etc... However, this paper adopts the social exchange theory (SET) as the key theory to ground the study. Social exchange theory, rooted in economic theory and modified by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) for the study of the social psychology of groups, focuses on the perceptions of the relative costs and benefits of relationships and their implications for relationship satisfaction (Andereck et al., 2005). Social exchange theory has provided a conceptual base for the examination of the inter-relationships among perceptions of costs and benefits, positive and negative impacts, and support for tourism (Choi & Murray, 2010). SET is useful in measuring people's participation and endorsement in socio-economic activities since it helps in revealing the basis for people's engagement, endorsement, and commitment to an activity. Similar research have also employed SET (Boley et al., 2014). Another reason for the SET's popularity is that it is essential for studying the divergent viewpoints of a given population in a certain community. The fact that people always examine the cost-benefit outcomes of participating in an event like tourism leads to the frequent use of this theory by tourism researchers. Stakeholders in tourism evaluate the physical and incorporeal benefits accruable from an investment of their resources before committing to it in order to ensure that costs do not outweigh the benefits, Gursoy et al (2002), however have criticised the use of the theory to study the effect of tourism to include social, environment and economic without isolating the effects of tourism into larger bases. In response toGursoy et al 's (2002) critique,Gursoy& Rutherford, (2004) widened Gursoy et al's (2002) model by adding economic benefits, social benefits, economic costs and social costs which they consider as four key areas which communities have expressed concerns about. They also cited that attachment to the community as well as challenges, interventions used are some of the areas people evaluate in determining the impact of tourism on their communities. A study carried out byMiyakuni(2012) found that there is a negative economic outcome of tourism and the environment.Miyakuni's (2012) study equally adopted the SET, thus highlighting the usefulness of the theory.

Figure 2. Theoretical framework



Note. This model is produced by Aref&Redzuan in 2009 summarizing the tourism Impacts and support for community capacity building in tourism development. Adopted from “Community Leaders’ Perceptions toward Tourism Impacts and Level of Community Capacity Building in Tourism Development” by FariborzAref&Ma’rofRedzuan, (2009), Journal of Sustainable Development, 2(3), p. 213. Copyright 2009 by Aref&Redzuan.

## Themes

### Perception

Nzama (2008) has stated that there is a strong positive relationship between the extent of the community in tourism development and their perceptions towards an increase in tourism development. Local residents are the ones who interact directly with tourists and hence, they are significant partners in the planning and management of Community-Based Sustainable Tourism. It is critical to have a good perspective and attitude toward tourism. According to Social Exchange Theory, local inhabitants' support for tourist growth is determined by their perceptions of the good or bad repercussions (Sutresna et al., 2019). Referring to a study of residents' perceptions towards tourism impacts by Manzoor et al (2019), the researchers noticed number of positive responds from the residents: tourism was an attractor to economic investments and spending; tourism was considered as a factor that contributes to a higher standard of living; and tourism provided more facilities and services to the residents. In contrast, a study of residents in Qatar towards the development in conservative cultures by Chong (2015) concluded that the residents believed the tourism increased the level of traffic congestion, and claimed this impact to be the primary complaint in the study. Clearly, tourism can have both positive and negative impact on the local community's social and cultural structure.

### Impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism (Socio-Economic Development)

Community Based Sustainable Tourism can be viewed as a tool for alternative development and long-term livelihood, with a focus on grassroots development. It has a positive reputation in rural areas for its numerous economic and social development impacts, whereas other kinds of development have proven to be inadequate (Lucchetti& Font, 2013).

The growing number of tourists visiting Gangtey and Phobjigeogs under Wangduephodrang district has a substantial impact on the people's socioeconomic situation. On the subject of tourism's benefits, local residents were grateful for the support and awareness they received, which improved their living situations through Community Based Sustainable Tourism project. Farmers' hardships have been eased by improved road connectivity, which has made trading their farm produce, particularly potatoes, easier.

However, as tourism grows in popularity and develops, local communities are beginning to believe that they are not receiving the expected benefits from tourists. As a result of the sacrifices made for the conservation of the wetland and Black Necked Cranes, some animosity is growing (RSPN, 2013).

## **Social Impacts**

### **Living Standard/ Quality of Life**

Many researchers believe that when local communities are involved in decision-making, benefits can be realised and the traditional lifestyles and values of the communities can be respected (Li, 2006). Success, however, relies on communities having a sense of project ownership (Scheyvens, 2002). Tourism can improve the quality of life in an area by increasing the number of attractions, recreational opportunities, and services (Eshlik, & Kaboudi, 2011). The quality of life of local communities is being impacted by tourism expansion, and there is growing concern about the consequences. Tourism has evolved over time as more guests visit a tourism site and participate in tourism activities, and the number of facilities has grown to assure the well-being of both local populations and visitors. In Bhutan, Homestay program has supported to develop and enhance the socio-economic level of the host community and improving the living standard of local people in the village. The main motive of the community was to gain economic benefits through tourism (Rai, 2019).

### **Interaction**

Interactions between community and tourists can impact positively in terms of creating opportunities, bringing societal peace, integration of different cultures and negative manners in the form of associated problems. Tourism also offers residents' opportunities to meet interesting people, make friendships, learn about the world, and expose themselves to new perspectives (Kumar et al., 2018). According to a study conducted at Gangtey, Wangdue, Bhutan, by Rai(2019) in her study states that, 100 percent of respondent's motivational reason for participating in Community Based Sustainable Program is for family income and 91 percent of respondents participate to interact with different culture of world.

### **Modernization**

Bhutan is one of those countries with a long history of traditional culture that has only recently entered the modern global economy, dealing first with its tourism potential in the 1970s and then with hydropower in the 1980s. Tourism, which is often viewed as one of the visible manifestations of globalization Biegańska et al(2014) has recently emerged as one of the country's major economic drivers leading to modernization taking place in line with the policy of high value-low impact tourism. Community based tourism has led to changes in rural places which are associated improvements in general cleanliness (food, clothing, village surroundings and campsite), improved sanitation (e.g., construction of pit toilets) and housekeeping (Rai, 2019).

### **Economic Impacts**

Harrill(2004)highlights residents with the most economic gain are the most supportive of the tourism industry. Tourism development usually involves an adjustment between economic benefits and environmental or cultural costs, residents cope by moderating the negative impacts based and emphasizing the economic gains to maintain satisfaction with their community (Dyer et al., 2007).

### **Employment generation**

The absorption of numerous workers might boost the income of local people if a region is developed into a new destination in the form of tourist communities. The local community must ensure that this is preserved by giving the greatest possible service to visitors. In addition to creating positive impacts in the form of jobs, the local community and

government must be able to mitigate negative repercussions, particularly those connected to environmental and cultural preservation in the area. Many studies have found that having tourism sites in a region has a favourable impact on development, particularly in terms of employment generation and development (Leonandri & Rosmadi, 2018). Tourism is extremely vital for a small landlocked country like Bhutan in terms of generating employment and revenue. In terms of revenue generating, it is only second to hydropower.

### **Contribution to Government Revenues**

Revenue Generations from Tourism Contribution to government revenues around the world are mostly the direct contributions generated by taxes on incomes from tourism employment and tourism businesses, and by direct levies on tourists such as departure taxes (Brogal, 2018). In Bhutan too, economy earns substantial foreign cash from tourism in addition to hydropower. Conservative figures by the Tourism Council of Bhutan estimate tourism's contribution to GDP at US\$ 90 million in 2010. It has also contributed to employment and created income opportunities through the development of locally owned and operated private-sector enterprises (Royal Monetary Authority, 2021). In 2004, the annual average local income from tourism was US \$874 (Rinzin et al., 2007). Thus, Community based tourism got conceived through this policy of high value – low impact and making its own small contributions to the government.

### **Infrastructural Development**

The aim of CBST ventures is to ensure that members of local communities have a high degree of control over activities taking place in their localities and a significant proportion of the economic benefits (Scheyvens, 2002). This contrasts with most tourism ventures which are controlled wholly by outside operators whose primary motive is to make profits. For local people to maximise their benefits and have some control over tourism occurring in their regions, (Omare et al., 2019.) suggests alternative tourism initiatives which aim to empower local people. Local communities need empowerment to help decide what tourism facilities and wildlife conservation programmes they want in their communities and how tourism costs and benefits are to be shared among different stakeholders (Omare et al., 2019.) .Due to lack of such empowerment, in Bhutan too, most of its rural areas lack infrastructure. As a result, roads leading to such rural areas are difficult to traverse through, thus making it an expensive venture not easily coverable with the ngultrum as opposed to the dollar. Without proper interest, there is little to no incentive to fix this issue (Schneiderman, 2020). With its importance as Bhutan's largest wetland, the home of the most cranes, and more recently as a Ramsar site, the Phobjikha Valley deserves to have a proper tourist management strategy in place that can monitor the infrastructure construction, which includes hotels and roadways that are happening somewhat uncontrollably, thus deemed necessary to investigate eco-friendly infrastructure construction (Rai, 2019).

### **Challenges**

An evaluation of CBST projects around the world carried out by the International Centre for Responsible Tourism at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK, Goodwin, (2008), found that CBST projects failed because of the following:

- a. Local Business to ensure sustainable local income or conservation funds (sale of crafts, food, accommodation and wildlife or cultural experiences to tourists).
- b. Lack of tourism facilities to generate income.
- c. Too many CBST initiatives rely on building lodges, which are capital intensive and need considerable maintenance, which can be difficult to secure revenue

Bhutan's community based tourism not only gives diverse benefits to the host community, stakeholders but also faces diverse difficulties when they are practically implementing it. According to Rai(2019), in her study, maximum (91%) respondents find

challenge of difference in culture between host of homestay and guest followed by language barrier (66%). Since it's a rural place, most of the people are illiterate and has less awareness regarding culture and language of different countries of the world.

COVID-19 hit Bhutan's economy badly because the system failed to consider new developments or feasible options to follow over the decades. This also questioned the preparedness of Country's community-based tourism business runners in the absence of foreign tourists. However, COVID-19 has sparked a renewed interest in domestic tourism. Around 80 different business owners are interested in expanding their operations into domestic tourism. They also hope to offer Camping, eco-tourism, and homestays to both international and domestic visitors (Schneiderman, 2020).

### **Intervention strategies**

A step forward in the type of interventions that prioritize development, encouraging long-term sustainability, involvement, community empowerment, and ownership, as well as favourable socio-economic outcomes. This type of intervention is based on three types of strategies:

- Access to economic advantages, which is based on greater job opportunities for the poor, training and capacity building, and benefit distribution throughout the community.
- Address the negative effects of tourism, such as environmental, social, and cultural issues.
- Emphasis on policies, procedures, and partnerships, including the development of appropriate policy frameworks, the promotion of participatory processes, and the encouragement of private-sector-poor collaborations.

The type of interventions adopted by the community of Phobjikha were carried out on the basis of the aforementioned strategies with regard to the challenges they encountered while practising and experiencing CBST in their community.

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# **METHODOLOGY**

## **Chapter Overview**

This chapter includes Research Paradigm, Research Design, Methodology, Research Instruments, Reliability and Validation of Instruments, Study area, Sample size, Data Collection and Data analysis.

### **Paradigm**

American philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1962) first used the word paradigm to mean a philosophical way of thinking. The word has its aetiology in Greek where it means pattern. In educational research the term paradigm is used to describe a researcher's 'worldview' (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Paradigms are thus important because they provide beliefs and dictates, which, for scholars in a particular discipline, influence what should be studied, how it should be studied, and how the results of the study should be interpreted (Kivunja & Bawa, 2017). Levitt et al (2018) states that the philosophical paradigm helps to explain why qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach for the research is chosen.

This study is grounded on pragmatism paradigm. Pragmatism is a research philosophy based on the epistemology that there is no single way to learning but many different ways of understanding because there are multiple realities. Knowledge of the multiple realities is therefore gained through an integration of multiple research methods encompassing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Through this integration, the researcher tried to gain a better understanding of the manifestation problems under study from the views of people who lived the experiences and from scientific modelling and testing of facts and figures. This mixed method approach helped enhance a more detailed understanding of research questions and results leading to a balanced conclusion on the challenges and opportunities about the research problem (Pure, 2019).

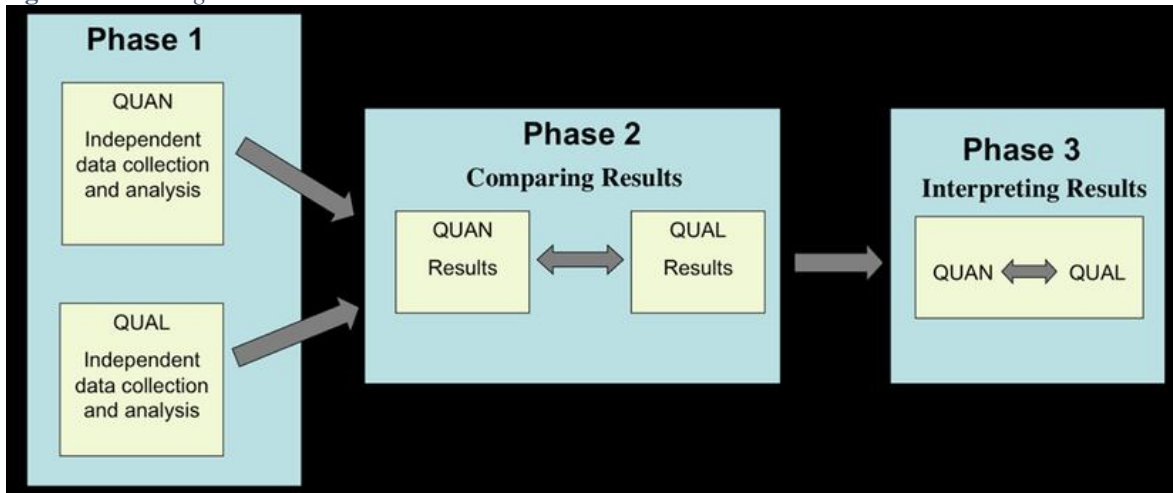
### **Research Approach**

The phases from broad assumptions through precise data collection, analysis, and interpretation are addressed by research approaches, which are plans and procedures for research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, for this research, a mixed method approach was used. According to Johnson & Turner, (2007) mixed methods research is becoming increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognized as the third major research approach, along with qualitative research and quantitative research. Furthermore, the convergence of findings from two or more methodologies, enhances our confidence that the results are legitimate and not a methodological item. It provides more comprehensive approach to the research problem than qualitative and quantitative methods alone (Johnson & Turner, 2007).

### **Research Design**

In order to conduct this study a convergent mixed methods research design was used, as it is an appropriate design that can help to guide this study as informed by pragmatism. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018) a convergent (or parallel or concurrent) mixed methods approach collects both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, merges the data, and uses the results to comprehend a research problem. The primary rationale behind this design is that one data collection form provides strengths to compensate for the limitations of the other, and that gathering both quantitative and qualitative data leads to a more full understanding of a study subject.

**Figure 3.** *Convergent Mixed Methods*

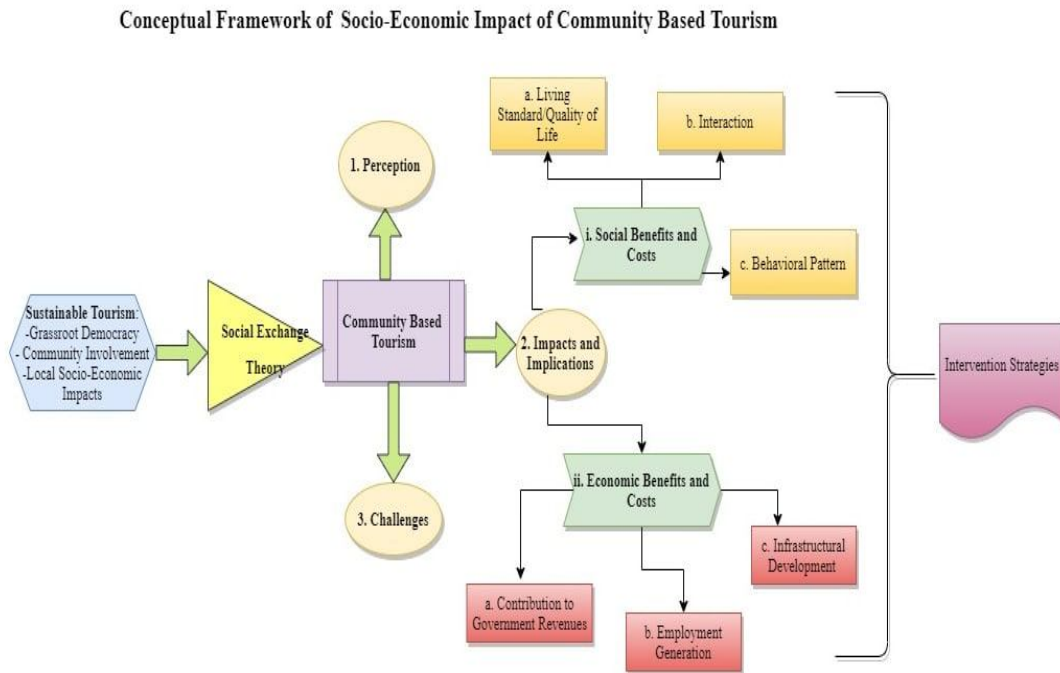


*Note.* This model is produced by Soares et al. in 2015 summarizing the three phases of convergent parallel research design of Creswell & Clark(2009). Adopted from “Dental students’ performance and perceptions on canal preparation: A mixed methods study,” by R. G. Soares et al., (2015), *Revista da ABENO*, 15(1), p. 102. Copyright 2015 by Soares et al.

### **Conceptual framework**

Figure 4 shows the conceptual framework for this study based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the aim of this study. The theory of SET explains that it has provided a conceptual base for the examination of the inter-relationships among perceptions of Social and economic impacts, affecting the livelihood of the community and their support for tourism (Choi & Murray, 2010). Another reason for SET's popularity is that it is essential for studying the divergent viewpoints of a given population in a certain community.

**Figure 4.** *Conceptual framework*



## Target population

A target population is a group of individuals or organizations from the population with some common defining characteristic that the researcher can identify and study (Creswell, 2014). The target population is the source of primary data to answer the research questions. Population included mainly the farmers, Homestay owners, business entities, RSPN employee, local residents from Gangtey and Phobjigeogs. For the purpose of this study, the target population had to be the part of Community Based Sustainable Tourism programme. Therefore, the target population for this study comprised of different stakeholders of CBST from the community of Phobjikha valley.

## Sampling strategies

A sample is defined as selected participants for the study, and the selection process is called sampling technique (Kothari, 2004). Sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that we can generalize the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole

In general there are two types of sampling called probability sampling and non-probability sampling. For this study, probability sampling was used to collect quantitative data. This is because every unit of the population has the same probability of being included in the sample, a chance mechanism is used in the selection process and it eliminates bias in the selection process. From different probabilities strategies of collecting quantitative data. This study adopted stratified random sampling, a probability sampling technique that is utilized when a heterogeneous sample is used and is divided into homogenous strata. The use of stratified sampling provided the researchers with an opportunity to be flexible in emphasis on some strata through the use of proportional sampling (Daniel, 2016).

## Qualitative Data

For qualitative sampling, the researcher used purposive stratified sampling, Survey Interview Questions and Focus Group Discussions respectively. The use of interviews will give the researchers an opportunity to probe and ask extra questions when a new line of inquiry propped up during the interview. When investigating a complex issue such as perceptions of the community whose livelihoods depend on a protected area, flexibility is critical. Permission letters were sought from the Dzongkhag, Environment and Cultural officers, village Gups, Geog Adm and RSPN personnel. Data will then be analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis.

## Sample size

A size is the group of participants in a study selected from the target population from which the researcher generalizes to the target population (Creswell, 2014). The size of sample should not be very large or too small and it should be optimum. According to Kothari (2009) optimum sample size fulfils the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility.

Under Wangduephodrang district, there are two Geogs in which the Community Based Tourism program is initiated and are most successful. Hence, a total of 99 Households from PhobjiGeog and Gangtey Geog were chosen for the study. Under PhobjiGeog, Dogsena-Gorphoog, Drangpa- Pangsar, Khemdro-Nemphel, Talachen-Tawa-Taphoog and Damchoe-Gangphel Chiwogs with 49 Households and Yeokorwog, Jangchen-Kumbu, Gangtey, Tabating-Yuesa chiwogs with 50 households (Local Government Portal, 2018).

## Survey

Employing Yamane's (1967) method of sample size determination, 99 household heads from two Geogs participated in the survey at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Yamane's method of sample size determination is adopted in order not to make unrealistic assumptions without performing any calculations. Furthermore, very large and small sample sizes are not recommended as it has its own consequences (Nayak, 2010).

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where, n' is the sample size

'N' is the population size

'e' is the acceptable sampling error at confidence level 0.05

$$n = 132 / [1 + 132(0.05)^2]$$

$$n = 99$$

Applying Yamane's formula for sample calculation give 99 as an ideal sample size for quantitative data collection at 95% confidence level with 5% margin of error, I will take 161 samples to account for possible attrition.

**Table 1.** *Survey participants*

Gewog	Total Sample	Sample size	Sample Size in percentage %
Phobji	52	31	39

Gangtey	80	68	61
Total	132	99	100

### Focus group discussion

To make findings valid and reliable, FGDs were used for this study to collect qualitative data to study the impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development of Phobjikha valley. Focus group discussion is a technique where a researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss a specific topic, aiming to draw from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the participants through a moderated interaction (Nyumba et al., 2018).

There are five types of focus group discussion technique (Nyumba et al., 2018). Single focus group, Two-way focus group, Dual Moderator focus group, Respondent Moderator focus group, Mini focus group and Online focus group are stated as different types of focus group discussion (Nyumba et al., (2018). For this study, Single focus group (SFG) will be adopted over other types of focus group. The main feature of SFG is the interactive discussion of a topic by a collection of all participants and a team of facilitators as one group in one place. Berkes (2004) believes that the link between people's perceptions and their socio-cultural situation is critical to decision-making on natural resources since most people derive their notions, mental constructions and interpretations from their immediate surrounding and develop these from experiential knowledge. This technique (SFG) has been used widely by both researchers and practitioners across different disciplines. A focus group usually consists of a small group of people, usually between 6 and 10, as well as a moderator who helps to direct the discussion. The moderator's purpose is to persuade participants to not only answer the pre-defined questions in the moderator's guide, but also to get them engaged with one another so that an in-depth conversation on the subject can take place (Lanthorn, 2016) . So, I will be using 8 participants under each group for the indepth study of my study.

4-6 groups are the average, though some opt for smaller studies and do just 2-3, and some opt for more and can do as many as 15. The more groups you have, the more ideas and opinions you will collect, but this is helpful only up to a point. Go beyond six, and additional groups are likely to tell you more of what you already know (Carlsen &Glenton, 2011). Thus, in my study, I have conducted 2 FGDs with 6 members each.

**Table 2.** *The framework of the FGDs conducted.*

Sl. No.	FGD	Male	Female	Total
1	FGD1	3	3	6
2	FGD2	2	4	6

### Data collection strategies and tools

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. For this study three different data collection tools were used, namely; Field Survey, Survey Interviews and FGD.

## **Survey**

Survey as a technique for collecting quantitative data is adopted since it is faster, more accurate, cost-effective and can be analyzed fast using statistical tools. Survey questionnaires will be pre-tested for validity (quantitative).

Quantitative data on impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development was collected using a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire consists of five sections; A-Demographic Information, B-Perception on Community Based Sustainable Tourism, C- Social Impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism and D- D. Economic Impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism. Section B, C, D and E were measured using statements with five-point Likert scales (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree).

## **Survey Interviews**

In order to assess the Perception and Socio-Economic Impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism, Survey Interviews (Qualitative) were used along with the Survey Questionnaire (Quantitative). The Survey Interviews assessed community's perception and the Impacts of CBST on their livelihood through their lived experiences and practices. 9 questions (3 questions for Perception, 3 for Social Impacts and 3 for Economic Impacts) were prepared for the respondents of different stakeholders.

## **Focus Group Discussion**

According to TümenAkyildiz, (2021), the main methods of data collection during a FGD include audio and tape recording, note-taking and participant observation. However, Krueger, (2002) believes that each of these methods presents different advantages and disadvantages and it is the researchers who should carefully select the method based on the context. Therefore, in this study, audio and tape recording (after seeking consent of the participants) and note-taking were adopted. FGDs were conducted for one hour.

## **Reliability and validity**

The accuracy of the measurement is referred to as validity. Validity describes how well a test is fitted to a certain context. The research is valid if the results are accurate in relation to the researcher's scenario, explanation, and prediction. If the method of measurement is reliable, the results will be accurate. A method is acceptable if it is trustworthy. A method, on the other hand, is not valid if it is not dependable (Nicolas, 2021). The level of validity can be improved by careful sampling, use of appropriate instruments, and suitable statistical treatments of data (Cohen et al., 2013).

Nicolas(2021) defines the consistency of measurement as reliability. The test's score's reliability indicates how reliable it is. The information is credible if the acquired data produces consistent results when examined using diverse procedures and sample groups. The results will be accurate if your approach is trustworthy. Reliability in quantitative research is degree of consistency for the measurement of data. In order to ensure reliability, expert views will be sought for reliability of the research tools.

On the other hand, in order to ensure reliability of FGD guiding questions, views will be sought from my supervisor and co-supervisors. The validity of transcribed FGDs were checked through inter-cordial reliability test since the participants were allowed to speak in Dzongkha (national language) or their local dialect.

## **Survey**

Survey data collected were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences-22 (SPSS 22) and cleaned for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to describe and summarize the Perception and Impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development of Phobjikha valley.

The selected software (SPSS-22) tool is easy-to-use for quantitative data analysis for coding, annotating, retrieving and reviewing textual data. The software was utilized to assist the researcher in managing the large numbers of documents of this research, which have combined numerical and categorical information. The quantitative software provides a wide range of exploratory tools to identify patterns in coding and relationship between assigned codes and other numerical or categorical properties. The tool's Rich-Text format for documents, support for font and paragraph formatting, graphics and tables, is combined with the fact that documents and data may be edited at any time without affecting the existing coding, and imported and exported in numerous file formats (MS Word, WordPerfect, RTF, HTML, MS Access, Excel and more). The software as a research tool has advanced integration features, which will allow the data collected in this research to be seamlessly utilized in future qualitative or mixed methods research.

**Table 3.** Reliability statistics of the sub scales for Community Based Sustainable Tourism

Sl. No	Sub-scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
1	Perception on CBST	7	0.788
2	Social Impacts of CBST	7	0.733
3	Economic Impacts of CBST	7	0.907

### **Pilot study**

Pilot study was carried out to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments. The instruments were piloted in two randomly selected chiwogs- Yoekorwog and Talachen. The pilot study contributed in locating ambiguities in the survey questionnaire and inadequacies in the coding system which in turn led to evaluation and improvement of the questionnaires as stated by (Srinivasan &Lohith, 2017). Moreover, researcher gained necessary experience in using the instruments prior to the main study. The piloted data collected was analysed and the result was used to modify the questionnaire.

### **Survey Interviews and FGD Questions**

To ensure the reliability and validity of the Survey Interviews and FGD Questions, the items were discussed and assessed by multiple experts to ensure their reliability and conformability.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is one way researchers can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refined the concept of trustworthiness by introducing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to parallel the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. All four criteria of trustworthiness are fulfilled.

- Credibility- It is determined by intercoder reliability since member checking is not possible due to language difficulty of the research participants.

- Transferability- rich description is provided to show that the research study's findings can be applicable to other contexts, circumstances, and situations.
- Dependability- The research process used is logical, traceable, and clearly documented.
- Conformability- Conformability is established since credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. Data collection procedure

The researcher obtained written approval for collecting data from the DashoDzongrab, Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag (see Appendix E) and verbal approval through mobile phone from GeogAdministrative Officer (due to lockdown restriction). After their approval, prior to employing survey questionnaires and tests and the conduct of FGD, the researcher briefed participants on the purpose of the research, and their right to withdraw from the research if they wish to. The researcher also distributed a voluntary consent form and participant information sheet to only those individuals who are willing to participate (see Appendix A and B).

## Data analysis

### Survey Questionnaire

Survey data collected were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences-22 (SPSS 22) and cleaned for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to describe and summarize the Perception and Impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development of Phobjikha valley.

The selected software (SPSS-22) tool is easy-to-use for quantitative data analysis for coding, annotating, retrieving and reviewing textual data. The software was utilized to assist the researcher in managing the large numbers of documents of this research, which have combined numerical and categorical information. The quantitative software provides a wide range of exploratory tools to identify patterns in coding and relationship between assigned codes and other numerical or categorical properties. The tool's Rich-Text format for documents, support for font and paragraph formatting, graphics and tables, is combined with the fact that documents and data may be edited at any time without affecting the existing coding, and imported and exported in numerous file formats (MS Word, WordPerfect, RTF, HTML, MS Access, Excel and more). The software as a research tool has advanced integration features, which will allow the data collected in this research to be seamlessly utilized in future qualitative or mixed methods research.

### Data Presentation

For survey data, the participants' ratings on the Perception, Social and Economic Impacts of CBST were grouped into five distinct levels employing Brown's criteria. Brown, 2011 suggest that Likert scales are more likely to be accurate than single-item scales because they contain more items. Consequently, Cronbach's alpha or another suitable reliability estimate should be used to assess the reliability of Likert scales because Likert scales have numerous items and can be interpreted as interval scales, descriptive statistics, correlational studies, factor analyses, analysis of variance techniques, etc. can all be used. Therefore, this study adopted Brown's Likert rating criteria and to assess its reliability, Cronbach's alpha estimate was run down for each themes.

**Table 3.** Likert Scale for Perception and Socio-Economic Impacts of CBST

Sl. No	Scale	Rank	Level	Categorization
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Lowest	Negative
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Low	
3	2.51-3.50	Not Sure	Moderate	Moderate

4	3.51-4.50	Agree	High	
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly agree	Highest	High

Note. Adapted from Brown, S. (2010). *Likert scale examples for surveys*. ANR Program evaluation, Iowa State University, USA.

### Qualitative data analysis

For FGDs and Survey Interviews, thematic analysis was adopted to examine community’s perception, Impacts, Challenges and Interventions of CBST. Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning across a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002). Through focusing on meaning across a dataset, it allows the researcher to examine the collective or shared meanings and experiences. This method is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about, and of making sense of those commonalities. The accessibility and flexibility of this method makes it more preferable. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phase thematic analysis approaches were employed in this study as shown in Table 10 (Tulip et al., 2020). Moreover, direct quotations of participants’ responses to the interview questions were also presented because in descriptive analysis it is important to make use of direct quotations from the participants and discuss the findings based on these quotations to ensure validity (Kara et al., 2018).

**Table 4. Braun and Clarke (2006) 6-step guide to good thematic analysis Phase**

Examples of procedure for each step	
1. Familiarization	Transcribing data: reading and re-reading; noting down initial codes
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features in the data in a systematic fashion across the data set, collecting data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each themes
4. Involved reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extract and the entire data-set; generate a thematic map
5. Defining and naming	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics for each theme; generation of clear names for each theme
6. Producing the report	Final opportunity for analysis; relate appropriate extracts; discussion of analysis; relate back to the research question or literature; produce report

Note: Adopted from “*Building wellbeing in people with chronic conditions: a qualitative evaluation of an 8-week positive psychotherapy intervention for people living with an acquired brain injury,*” by C. Tulip, Z. Fisher, H. Bankhead, L. Wilkie, J. Pridmore, F. Gracey, J. Tree, and A. H. Kemp, 2020, *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*. Copyright 2020 by *Frontiers in Psychology*.

### Focus Group Discussion

Raw data gathered from FGDs were transcribed, coded and categorized into various themes for the interpretation of the qualitative component of the data. According to Canary (2019), qualitative data is often elusive to researchers. Transcripts allow one to capture original, nuanced responses from the respondents. You get their response naturally using their own words—not a summarized version in your notes (Canary, 2019).

**Table 5. Data Analysis Procedure**

<b>Research question</b>	Qualitative	Quantitative	Analysis Techniques	Remarks
<b>Research question 1</b> How do residents perceive the impact of Community Based Tourism on the socio-economic development of their community?	Survey Questionnaire (Semi-structured questions B 8, B9, B 10) FGD Guiding Question 1, 2 and 3	Survey Questionnaire (Likert scale) Section B ( 7 Items)	Thematic Analysis Descriptive Analysis (Mean, standard deviation)	
<b>Research question 2</b> What are some of the social impacts and economic benefits of Community Based Tourism?	Survey Questionnaire (Semi-Structured questions, Social- C8, C9, C10 and Economic D8, D9, D10) FGD Guiding Question 4,5,6,7 and 8	Survey Questionnaire (Likert scale) Section C (Social, 7 items)and Section D (Economic, 7 items)	Thematic Analysis Descriptive statistics (Mean, standard deviation)	
<b>Research question 3</b> What are some of the challenges faced by the residents due to implementation of Community Based Tourism?	FGD Guiding Question 9,10,11 and 12		Thematic analysis	
<b>Research question 4</b> What are some intervention strategies to enhance the socio-economic development of the community through community based tourism?	FGD Guiding Question 13		Thematic analysis	

### **Data Triangulation**

Triangulation is used to boost the credibility and validity of study findings. Validity is concerned with the extent to which a study accurately represents or evaluates the notion or concepts being explored; credibility relates to trustworthiness and how convincing a study is. In a research project, triangulation can help ensure that basic biases stemming from the use of a single method or observer are overcome by mixing theories, methods, or observers. Triangulation is also an attempt to investigate and describe complex human behavior utilizing a range of methodologies in order to provide readers with a more balanced explanation. It is a method that allows data to be validated and verified (Noble. H & Heale, 2019). There has

been mixed views on the uses of triangulation in researches. Some authors argue that triangulation is just for increasing the wider and deep understanding of the study phenomenon, while others have argued that triangulation is actually used to increase the study accuracy, in this case triangulation is one of the validity measures (Hussein, 2009).

### **Ethical consideration**

According to Osho (2017), ethics are a set of moral principles of conduct used to govern the decision making behaviour of an individual or a group of individuals. Therefore, all ethical issues that need to be addressed in this study are dealt with and adhered strictly as per the ethical or research code of conduct and regulations of ZHIB 'TSOL Research Policy of the Royal University of Bhutan, 2014.

Ethical approval was sought from Samtse College of Education for the conduct of this study (see Appendix C). The researcher sought and obtained permission from the relevant authorities (see Appendices) before carrying out this study. The research permit was obtained from Samtse College of Education (see Appendix D). Participants for both survey and FGD were based on voluntarism. The researcher had briefed the participants about their rights to withdraw at any point of time during the data collection. Participants were also briefed on the confidentiality of their participation followed by recording of informed and voluntary form and participant information sheet (see Appendix A and B). All data collected for the research are stored and only the researcher has access to the data. The data will be stored safely for a minimum of five years for any future reference or record.

UNDER PEER REVIEW

## RESULTS& DISCUSSIONS

### Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained after the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data. The data comes from 99 survey respondents and two FGDs from the community of Phobjikha valley, Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag as described in Chapter 3. The results are presented first followed by the discussion. The results and discussions are presented under the respective questions based on three five main themes; Perception of Community Based Sustainable Tourism , Social Impacts of CBST, Economic Impacts of CBST, Challenges faced and Interventions adopted by community of Phobjikha.

### Demographic Profile

A total of 99 household members participated in the survey. Of the total respondents, 46.5% were male and 53% were female.

**Table 7.**Survey Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	46	46.5
Female	53	53.5
Total	99	100.0

**Table 8.** Education Qualification of the Survey Participants

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
College	18	18.2
Higher Secondary	18	18.2
Middle Secondary	15	15.2
Lower Secondary	5	5.1
Primary	10	10.1
Monastic	9	9.1
NFE	4	4.0
Illiterate	20	20.2
Total	99	100.0

From the total respondents 20.2 % of them had not received formal education and were illiterate which accounts to the maximum respondents for the survey. 18.2 % of the respondents received higher secondary education and other 18.2 % received college level education. 9.1% were from monastic education background and 10.1% completed primary education and only 4% received Non-Formal Education. The education qualification of the respondents was considered to derive diverse opinions from different respondent qualification group that can influence the role of Community Based Sustainable Tourism in bringing socio-economic development in the valley.

**Table 9.**Age wise Respondent

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-29	36	36.4
30-39	29	29.3
40-49	19	19.2

50&above	15	15.2
Total	99	100.0

The age wise respondent information was also collected as it will influence their information about Community Based Sustainable Tourism. Of the total respondents, 36.4 % fall between the age of 20-29, 29.3% were between the age of 30-39 and 15.2 % were of 50 years and above.

**Table 10.** Respondents' role in Community Based Sustainable Tourism

Role	Frequency	Percent
Education and Gift Shop	9	9.1
Farmer	41	41.4
Handicraft	4	4.0
Homestay Operator	23	23.2
Horse Ride Rental	1	1.0
Local Guide	5	5.1
Local Resident	15	15.2
RSPN Employee	1	1.0
Total	99	100

Another demographic variable considered was the role of the respondents in Community Based Sustainable Tourism. The role the respondents played in Community Based Sustainable Tourism is considered as it is greatly going to affect their lived experience in running the program and its relevance in addressing the challenges. Of the total participants, 41.4% were farmers, 23.2 % were homestay operators, 15.2% were of local residents which included the civil servants who are also a part of the community, 5.1 % were local guides and 1% was of Horse ride rental and another 1% was a RSPN employee.

### Survey Respondents by Chiwog

A total of 99 household members participated in the survey. The maximum participants were from Gangtey with 50 participants and the minimum were from Dogselma and Drang chiwogs with one participant each. The respondents were chosen based on the roles they play in Community Based Sustainable Tourism program as it is going affect their lived experience in being part of Tourism and in addressing the related challenges and interventions.

**Table 11.** Survey Respondents by Chiwog

Geog	Chiwog	Frequency	Percent
	Dogselna- Gorphoog	1	1.0
	Drang- Pangsar	1	1.0
Phobji	Damchoe-Gangphel	12	12.0

	Khemdro- Nemphel	14	14.0
	Talachen-Tawa-Taphoog	3	3.0
	Gangtey	50	50.0
Gangtey	Jangchey- Kumbu	4	4.0
	Tabating-Yuesa	12	12.0
	Yoekorwog	2	2.0
	Total	99	100.0

### Focus Group Participants

The study collected qualitative data of research questions 3 and 4 through Focus Group Discussion using semi structured interview guiding questions. Total of two FGDs were organized with a total of 6 participants in each group. There were 3 male and 3 female participants in FGD 1 and 2 males and 4 females in FGD 2. The participants were chosen based on the roles they cater in program. The FGDs were organized mainly to discuss the general views of the impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on the socio-economic development of the community, the challenges they face in running the program and the interventions they use to overcome those challenges.

### Research Question 1: Perception of Community on the Community Based Sustainable Tourism

In this section, the quantitative and the qualitative findings of Perception of the Community on the establishment of Community Based Sustainable Tourism are presented.

The quantitative results were collected using Field Survey questionnaire based on Social exchange theory which focuses on the perceptions of the relative costs and benefits of relationships and their implications for relationship satisfaction (Andereck, et al., 2005). Social exchange theory has provided a conceptual base for the examination of the inter-relationships among perceptions of costs and benefits, positive and negative impacts, and support for tourism (Choi & Murray, 2010).

The overall mean is ( $N = 99, M = 3.92, SD = 0.94$ ) which indicated that the community of Phobjikha has a high positive perception towards Community Based Sustainable Tourism. The item '*CBST increases pride in cultural identity*' has the highest mean ( $N= 99, M = 4.32, SD=.81$ ) followed by '*Helps promote our cultural and traditional practices (traditional houses, art and paintings, local cuisine and national dress)*' ( $N=99, M= 4.22, SD=.92$ ). On the other hand, the item '*CBST increases exploitation of local residents*' has the lowest mean ( $N= 99, M= 3.42, 1.09$ )

**Table 12.** Perception of Community Based Sustainable Tourism

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
CBST increases pride in cultural identity	99	4.32	.81
CBST helps to earn and diversify the sources of Income for my family	99	4.01	1.00
Promotes interaction with different cultures from all over the world	99	4.05	.77

Helps promote our cultural and traditional practices (traditional houses, art and paintings, local cuisine and national dress).	99	4.22	.92
Community organization is capable of effectively operating and managing CBST.	99	3.57	.97
CBST increases the cost of living	99	3.87	.97
CBST increases exploitation of local residents.	99	3.42	1.09
Mean		3.92	0.94

*Scale: 1.00 -1.50m (Lowest); 1.51 -2.50 (Low); 2.51-3.50 (Moderate); 3.51-4.50 (High); 4.51-5.00 (Highest) (Adopted from Brown, 2010)*

The qualitative results collected through questionnaire interviews and FGDs indicated that community-based sustainable tourism has increased pride in the community's cultural identity. Participant 37 from the open source interview shared, “Yes, when tourist visit our country, they make us proud to be Bhutanese by posting our culture and traditions on social media.”

The focus group participants also revealed that the establishment of Community Based Sustainable Tourism in their community has highly benefitted them to earn and diversify the sources of income for their family validating the quantitative findings which indicated a high positive perception toward CBST with an overall mean of ( $M = 3.92$ ).

Yes, it benefits us, the operators of the hotels benefit from it - such a road connection would not have existed for a household if there had not been tourism in our valley. Even the community benefits from tourism as we can also enjoy the charm of the treetops/canopies as we love to give ourselves some recreational treats and ecological services. Many small shops also emerged. Stone bath shops and services have emerged who can avail the services if we can afford it. Provide employment opportunities for our youth.

A study conducted by (Ahebwa, et al., 2016) in Buganda region, Uganda, also supports the results of the present study. The authors have shown tourism as a factor that contributed to a higher standard of living and having provided more facilities and services to the residents. The author further added that his findings revealed tourism as a helpful factor in providing job opportunities, recreational treats, their interaction with the foreigners, and in infrastructural development of their community. The findings of his study indicated that the respondents of Buganda region, Uganda have positive perception about CBST. Similarly, the findings of this study too revealed that the respondents of Phobjikha generally have a positive perception towards the operation of Community Based Sustainable Tourism in their community.

However, this current finding on the perception of CBST, differs from the findings presented by Rinzin et al(2007) who found out that though local communities welcome tourists and claim their visits have no negative effects on their culture, yet, during the busy tourist season, some ecotourism and sustainable development issues with congestion have

been reported at some of Bhutan's most popular cultural events and on some of its trekking routes. Phobjikha is also of no exception to this as festive season drags hundreds of tourists into their community leaving their small area congested almost throughout the festive days.

Further, a study of residents in Qatar towards the development in conservative cultures by Akkawi(2010) also concluded that tourism can have both positive and negative impact on the local community's social and cultural structure. It can therefore, be assumed that every single respondent of the community may perceive Community Based Sustainable Tourism in a different way depending upon his or her experiences.

**Research Question 2: What are the social and economic impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on the community?**

In this section, the quantitative and the qualitative findings of the Social Impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism program on the community are presented. The overall mean is ( $N = 99, M = 3.79, SD = 0.9$ ) which indicated a high social impact of CBST in the community. The item '*CBST raises interest in maintaining and preserving historic buildings and holy sites*' has the highest mean ( $N= 99, M = 4.24, SD=.84$ ) followed by '*Meeting outsiders provides valuable experience for local people as they can learn about different cultures and knowledge from tourists.*' ( $N=99, M= 4.12, SD=.82$ ). On the other hand, the item '*CBST causes value distortion among the youth.*' has the lowest mean ( $N= 99, M= 3.43, SD=1.03$ ) as shown in Table 13.

**Table 13.** Social Impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
CBST raises interest in maintaining and preserving historic buildings and holy sites.	99	4.24	.84
CBST causes value distortion among the youth.	99	3.43	1.01
CBST creates opportunities for leisure activities.	99	3.69	.92
Meeting outsiders provides valuable experience for local people as they can learn about different cultures and knowledge from tourists.	99	4.12	.82
Local people change their way of life due to CBST.	99	3.84	1.02
CBST stimulates socio-cultural activities.	99	3.78	.82
CBST increases exploitation of local residents.	99	3.44	.98

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Total	3.79	0.9
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Scale: 1.00 -1.50m (Lowest); 1.51 -2.50 (Low); 2.51-3.50 (Moderate); 3.51-4.50 (High); 4.51-5.00 (Highest) (Adopted from Brown, 2010)

In addition to these findings, the qualitative open source survey interviews also agreed that ‘Community Based Sustainable Tourism raises interest in maintaining and preserving historic buildings and holy sites’ and disagrees with the variable that states that ‘Community Based Sustainable Tourism causes value distortion among the youth.’ Participant 57 of open source survey interview confirms the claim.

Community Based Sustainable Tourism had provided a chance to execute service to showcase our diverse cultural inheritance which makes us proud and represent our spiritual ethnicity. Due to constant motivation and encouragement and seeing tourist liking and sharing our unique culture towards other world, we people would feel more proud and have the will to prepare and promote our unique culture.

The excerpt from FGD 1 also confirms the claim, “We don’t have much to learn or see from them, they wear our traditional dress gho, in our farmer community, and they love our culture.” These findings indicated that community experiences more of positive social impact of Community Based Sustainable Tourism more than that of negative impacts. Despite they get to see some minor influential value distortion in youth, majority of the participants were of the opinion that it would not make much difference. Participant 23 from the open source interview shared the concern, “ Not now but maybe in future, we may face such problems of losing our culture and traditions because youth tend to copy other culture instead of feeling proud and taking care of our own culture.” This result may be explained by the fact that though CBST offers an opportunity to the community to develop yet it can bring along an unseen future of that can become a threat to its rich culture and traditions.

This finding is consistent with the findings of García et al (2015), where the authors supported that tourism can have a significant impact on societal dynamics and can modify a community's sociocultural component, especially with the interactions taking place between visitors and hosts causing both positive and bad effects. Further Eslami et al(2019) also revealed that though tourism has evolved into a platform for showcasing the diversity of regional culture and the arts, raising awareness of the importance of preserving historic structures and cultural landmarks, and ultimately enhancing community well-being yet unfortunately, it also pointed out that tourism also encourages unfavorable effects including criminal activity, large crowds, traffic congestion, and parking issues.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Ngguyen and Serrao-Neuman, (2022) in Khanh Hoa Province of Vietman, reported that due to a sharp increase in the number of visitors, Khanh Hoa province's tourism industry has improved the quality of social life for the region's indigenous population resulting in an upgraded system of restaurants and hotels that cater to tourists’ needs. Further Wijaya et al (2021) authors also mentioned that CBST not only helps in improving the quality of life of indigenous population but also it helps in gaining skills and knowledge through various training facilitated by both CBST and the local government. For example, homestay management training, English language training for tour guides, and training on making food.

These findings thus, provides an insight into how Community Based Sustainable Tourism influences dynamics of societal impacts and how this translates practically into the operation of Community Based Sustainable Tourism and contributing to sustainable development (Lee & Jan, 2019) that can impact the livelihood of the people in Phobjikha valley.

**Research Question 2: What are the social and economic impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism on the community?**

In this section, the quantitative and the qualitative findings of the economic impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism program on the community are presented. The overall mean ( $N = 99, M = 3.88, SD = 0.97$ ), indicating a High Economic Impact of CBST on the community. The item ‘*CBST creates many new jobs in the community.*’ has the highest mean ( $N= 99, M = 4.07, SD=1.01$ ) followed by ‘*Household income increases because of CBST.*’ ( $N=99, M= 3.98, SD=1.01$ ). On the other hand, the item ‘*The overall cost of living is higher because of CBT.*’ has the lowest mean ( $N= 99, M= 3.68, SD=.90$ ) as presented in Table 14.

**Table 14.** Economic Impacts of CBST

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
CBST creates many new jobs in the community.	99	4.07	1.01
Household income increases because of CBST.	99	3.98	1.01
Community members have better well-being because of CBST.	99	3.91	.89
Local products can be sold at higher prices.	99	3.80	1.03
The overall cost of living is higher because of CBT.	99	3.68	.90
Tourism improves living utility infrastructure (supply of water, electric, telephone etc.)	99	3.92	1.04
Tourism increases the cost of living.	99	3.79	.88
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.97</b>

Scale: 1.00 -1.50m (Lowest); 1.51 -2.50 (Low); 2.51-3.50 (Moderate); 3.51-4.50 (High); 4.51-5.00 (Highest) (Adopted from Brown, 2010)

Supporting the quantitative findings, the qualitative open source survey interview and the Focus Group discussions also indicated that the ‘*CBST creates many new jobs in the community*’ and disagrees with the item ‘*The overall cost of living is higher because of CBST.*’ A participant from the open source interview shared:

They create more jobs and opportunities as per the demands of the tourists to the local people like opening cafe and pizza shops. Our youths who are dropped out of school especially those who have completed 10th grade and 12th, settle in their own home converting to homestays or either running a local business shop like selling of wool and crane items.

The discussions from the two FGDs also corroborate the quantitative findings. It was learned from their discussions that CBST creates many new jobs in the community. “Many small shops also sprang up. Stone bath businesses of who can afford also started the business. Moreover, it provide job opportunities to our youth.” (FGD 1)

These findings give us a positive answer of how the establishment of Community Based Sustainable Tourism in their community has benefitted them economically. It provided a platform to the community to be self-sufficient by either getting employed because of the program or just being a part of the community. Participants of FGD 1 shared, “Though homestays and shops are benefitted but as a whole we the community will be benefitted at large, road connectivity, inter personal relationship would be developed.”

Community Based Sustainable Tourism, thus, from this findings can be concluded that it is essential in understanding the importance of operating Community Based Sustainable Tourism in order to bring out economic progress in their community.

This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Nguyen et al (2022) in Vietnam, where the authors revealed that Community Based Sustainable Tourism encourages the use of tourism for the Economic growth of their community. Likewise, the participants of the study have expressed that Community Based Sustainable Tourism bring out positive impact on the socio-economic development of their community. This view from the participants may be explained by the fact that Community Based Sustainable Tourism gives an opportunity to connect their community with the rest of the world.

Further, Barusman et al(2020) shared similar ideas in their research titled Sustainable Tourism with Community Based Tourism in Lampung, Indonesia, that CBST provides them an understanding of the positive influences of it on the locality and their lives. It helps them too make informed decisions on the range of personal and community issues. Sustainable development of tourism activities, creating significant jobs and revenues, positively contributing to the economic growth of society, bringing benefits to the community, especially the local people.

Generally, the economic impacts are a major impact in tourism as many studies on tourism discussed the positive and negative economic impacts. As mentioned above, tourism is open job employment for local people and add to the source of income for them (Enilov& Wang, 2022).

On the contrary,Okech et al (2012)in their study found out that though tourism encourages the local government to improve the infrastructure and facilities in the community, it also creates a wider economic gap among local people because not all local people could take the opportunity in the tourism industry and take economic benefit from it.

The community of Phobjikha being solely dependent on potato cultivation cannot be ascertained because his/her income depends on the weather and other natural factors and requires a lot of capital to cultivate potatoes. Thus, the first economic impact is an increase in job opportunities for the community. There have been many job opportunities in the tourism sector that can become additional jobs or substitute for their old jobs as farmers such as travel agencies, local/Handicraft shops, restaurants, local tour guides, drivers, homestays/hotels, rental services for camping equipment, and Bicycle/Horse rental services.

In addition, Rai (2019) in her study conducted in Phobjikha on Homestays has shown that Homestays which is a fundamental part of the program is great opportunity for youths to use their new skill to increase economic stability to self as well provide various social benefits to other members of rural communities. From the data above, it can be concluded that CBST activities have had more positive economic impacts than negative impacts at least up to these days whereby, the local people of Phobjikha can improve their income and welfare.

## **Research Question**

3. What are some of the challenges faced by the residents in carrying out Community Based Sustainable Tourism in the community?

### **Challenges**

Majority of the FGD participants reported four major challenges faced by the community in running the Community Based Sustainable Tourism program. They are; Lack of market for business runners, Covid restrictions, waste management, changes in traditional cultural practices, and the recent major change made in Chapter 2, section 7 of the Tourism Levy Bill of Bhutan 2022 which stated, “A tourist shall be liable to pay a tourism levy known as the SDF of USD 200 per night, which may be revised by the Competent Authority from time to time.”

### **Lack of Market**

Community believes that they do have skills to present to the tourists but the problem they face often is because of the lack of market. The participants of FGD 1 shared they get opportunities to use their skills only during festive occasions. “During crane festivals, as per our skills and capabilities, we get opportunity to sell locally brewed ara, making local noodles, bread, etc... which can bring us profits.” This indicates that the community has more potential to fulfil the aims of Community Based Sustainable Tourism in making them self-sufficient and self-reliant given the right platform and resources.

### **Covid 19 Pandemic and Sustainability**

Participants of both the FGDs were of same opinion that tourism related challenges were mostly felt during the covid 19 pandemic. To this FGD 1 shared that:

Except for covid restrictions we have never faced such major problems. Starting from rations like edible oil and fossil fuels got hampered and it is all caused by this pandemic. Like our fourth King used to say, to be self-reliant, we should be prepared to be self-sufficient if such problems persist.

Correspondingly, FGD 2 stated that:

It affected us a lot, no market to sell our products, no tourists to entertain, no income for hoteliers and handicrafts. We had to close our homestays, hotels and shops as we didn't have any visitors. In fact we were more scared of tourist visiting us thinking they would bring covid which can create problem in our society.

The sustainability of Community Based Sustainable Tourism was seen as a challenge in the long run because majority of the participants resorted to the view that they cannot depend on tourism if they happen to face such unprecedented issues like that of Covid 19 pandemic again. Community is of highest belief that profit generated from potato cultivation would surpass the benefits they can derive from Community Based Sustainable Tourism. Only thing is it would require more hard work than that of tourism. Both the FGDs confirmed the claim “We have full hope on farming- cultivating potatoes, and other crops. Farm work would always help us.”

This current finding on the impact of Covid 19 and its restrictions placed on the community tell us that Community Based Sustainable Tourism was not really prepared to face such unprecedented calamities and somehow failed to make it sustainable.

### **Changes in Traditional Cultural Practices**

Though majority of the participants agreed to the opinion that there are more positive impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism than negative impacts, few participants

were also of the opinion that there are also some changes in our traditional and cultural practices. Use of porter pony for transportation purposes are replaced by cars due to road accessibility. Horses today are used for recreational purposes, run by business agent for tourism purposes only. Tilling field by oxen was yet another lost traditional practices of the valley replaced by modern machineries. FGD 2 participants confirmed this claim “Culture lost so far is tilling the field by oxen and the horse carrying loads.”

### **Preservation of Ramsar site**

Preservation of Ramsar site by the community was also seen as a future asset of the community preserved under the care of Community Based Sustainable Tourism. However, to maintain its consistency in preserving it is also seen as a challenge where people hesitated in giving up their land which fell nearby the site. FGD 2 participants discussed that:

We are worried of the protection and preservation of the Ramsar site because we do have some people who are hesitant to give up their land nearby the Ramsar site, people who would let their cattle, horses and yaks to graze freely on it and we even have some people encroaching on the wetland, littering and damaging its sanctity.

### **Waste Management**

Waste management was another challenge seen by the community which got better with the establishment for CBST in the valley. It was emphasized due to CBST's existence and Ashi Jetsun Pema's initiative in managing the waste. Nevertheless, community despite taking up various measures, still fails to maintain its consistency due to numbers of visitors plying back and forth into the valley. Both the FGDs discussed that, “Along with the visitors and new shops in the valley, comes the waste”.

### **Tourism Levy Bill of Bhutan 2022**

Tourism Levy Bill of Bhutan 2022 which stated, “A tourist shall be liable to pay a tourism levy known as the SDF of USD 200 per night is also seen as a great challenge by the community.” Both the FGDs elucidated that:

We wonder if there will be any tourists visiting our valley then. Only rich foreigners would visit for as long as they visit the country it is for sure they would visit our valley. Though homestays and shops are benefitted but as a whole we the community are benefitted at large with road connectivity, inter personal relationship etc... but if the number of tourists decreases with the imposing of this Bill, the scenario would be no different than what we had been facing so far because of Covid 19 pandemic.

It would hamper the hoteliers and the business runners the most because I think if tax is increased except for the rich tourist, many might not be able to afford to visit our country and as a result, we may get affected. This finding shows that certain changes if not big are expected from this passing of the bill.

From these findings, it can be concluded that aforementioned are few challenges that the community of Phobjikha encounter due to CBST. It is understood that there is a scope in having CBST in their community as most of the participants agreed with positive responses.

However, amongst those aforementioned challenges, these results show that managing waste is and could be of a major challenge in Phobjikha Valley now and in future. Waste management as a challenge aligns with (Rai, 2019) who reported that with the increase in the number of visitors, there is increase in the production of the waste generation. It is also consistent with (Wijaya et al., 2021), where the authors reported that in addition to the economic and social implications observed in Karimunjawa Island of Indonesia, tourism-related environmental effects may in the future affect the quality of life in the community.

Many respondents of their study admitted that there was a significant amount of plastic waste from food and beverage packaging.

Similarly, Phobjikha valley is of no difference in when it comes to the managing of waste. The dump site of Phobjikha valley today, is seen to be over flooded with waste where once it used to be a pasture where the cattle fed on. Hence, if this waste is not controlled, the environment's cleanliness can deteriorate both the health of the valley and the inflow of the tourist visit as well.

Another prominent challenge that brought conflicted feelings to the community was of the passing of the Tourism Levy Bill of Bhutan 2022 which stated, "A tourist shall be liable to pay a tourism levy known as the SDF of USD 200 per night is also seen as a great challenge by the community." Dema (2022) in 'Kuensel' newspaper, mentioned that the number of visitors to DawaPenjor's guesthouse in Gangtey is rising compared to two years ago, according to the homestay owner. He currently hosts 20 to 30 visitors each month (p.2). While many Homestay owners anticipate a successful future, others are concerned that the new Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) may deter travelers from coming to the nation. The majority of the visitors who visited Karma, 47, has paid the old SDF, he claimed. He is afraid that with the new SDF, visitors might decide to stay in hotels over homestays or not visit the nation at all.

On the contrary, Thobchog (2022), reported in 'The Bhutanese' newspaper that Agriculture Minister YesheyPenjor was of the belief that If done properly, it will raise the caliber of food served in hotels and restaurants and give us opportunities to trade agricultural goods. While we worry that tourists won't be able to pay the 200 USD SDF or that it will reduce the number of visitors to the nation, nothing can be said for sure without testing it out first. We can always modify this policy if situations deteriorate.

Further, Yuden (2022) reported that from September 23 to October 12, 2022, 5,790 tourists entered Bhutan, according to the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB). 2,016 visitors who came in the nation as a whole paid the full Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD 200, whereas 1,585 visitors paid the previous SDF of USD 65 and 2,189 visitors paid the SDF of NIS 1,200. On September 23, 2022, Bhutan fully launched its tourist industry, welcoming 119 foreign visitors on the first day. The number of tourists entering the nation is rising regularly, according to data from TCB (Tourism Council of Bhutan).

Therefore, this finding can be concluded with a note that although amendment of the new Bill of Tourism overhauled the community of Phobjikha, what future it may bring upon the community because of CBST cannot be ascertained. Nevertheless, (Tourism Levy Act of Bhutan, 2022) discloses in CHAPTER 3 that a Competent Authority shall strengthen and implement strategies to ensure that the benefits of High Value Low Volume tourism across all regions of the country, counting Phobjikha valley inclusively.

### **Research Question**

4. What are some intervention strategies adopted to enhance socio-economic development of the community through Community Based Sustainable Tourism?

### **Interventions**

To have a good sense of the scope of the impacts of Community Based Sustainable Tourism, it is important to consider the development interventions of tourism adopted by the community or by the country at large. Tabatabaei, F (2019) stated that several tourism development interventions have been made in Developing Countries, depending on the goals or priorities – either to develop tourism or use tourism as a tool for development.

According to Ndlovu & Rogerson (2003), a number of initiatives in small towns and rural areas are taking positive steps toward the type of interventions that put development first, promoting sustainability, participation, community empowerment and ownership, as

well as positive socio-economic impacts. These initiatives are encouraging the small scale intervention, which is still in its early operational stages, suitable especially for the small community like Phobjikha valley.

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data of this study had revealed four major interventions;

### **Creation of Market**

Interventions adapted by the community to curb the challenges faced by the community in creating a platform to run their businesses were; they reused abandoned land for building homestays and shops, converted their houses into homestays and small local shops to run local businesses, renovated and upgraded their homes into small westernized cafes, and stone bath facilities.

### **Covid 19 Pandemic and Sustainability**

Covid 19 pandemic hit hard on the tourism sector where the people of the community were also made to realize the importance of being self-sufficient.

Starting from rations like edible oil and fossil fuels got hampered and it is all caused by this pandemic. Like our fourth King used to say, to be self-reliant, we should be prepared to be self-sufficient if such problems persist. To do so, our community welcomed its people by giving them access to the tourism facilities meant only for tourists and as a result domestic visitors started exploring the valley more than ever, Bhutanese people learnt to be independent and earn money even in the absence of tourists in the country where Bhutanese money remained in Bhutan only, which was also good (FGD 1).

Allowing our domestic visitors to access the tourism facilities available in the valley by Community Based Sustainable Tourism would also let them have a sustainable future. Giving an access to the recreational facilities meant for tourists to the domestic and local visitors would help Community Based Sustainable Tourism to function sustainably even in the absence of foreign tourists.

### **Preservation of Ramsar site**

To preserve the Ramsar site of the valley, the lands that fell under the Ramsar site were given land replacements by the government which is also a part of tourism policies to maintain its sanctity especially reserved for the cranes that can attract tourists in the community. Strict rules and timely monitoring of the site is being done by the concerned authorities.

### **Waste management**

Managing waste was the biggest hurdle faced by the community. There was no proper waste management strategy followed by the community. After the establishment of Community Based Sustainable Tourism, Waste management was taken seriously by the government and the local leaders to make it presentable to the outsiders. Nevertheless, with time, it has now again started to become an issue which has been emphasized even by the highest dignitaries visiting the place. To tackle the problem, community began to manage waste at an individual level and also tries to abide by the initiative taken by Her Majesty Ashi Jetsun Pema to keep the valley clean.

The finding of this study indicate that the aforementioned Interventions are the small scale interventions put in action to overcome the challenges faced by the community of Phobjikha valley. Amongst the mentioned interventions, the interventions that can be functioned immediately are the recovering from Covid 19 Pandemic and creation for market for business runners on their local effort. With the reopening of the border gates and welcoming of the tourists in the country, Phobjikha community are already benefiting and

seeing the opportunities **ahead them**. (Dolkar, 2022) reported that Bhutan received 120 international visitors when it reopened its borders on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, and the tourists are to visit few places in and around the country including Phobjikha valley which indicates that the community are seeing opportunities after two years of Covid 19 pandemic.

On the contrary, (Yuden, 2022) reported that the impact of the pandemic has still not fully recovered, and the Ukraine war has made the situation worse. Bhutan can be of no exception when it comes to the case of global crisis. Nevertheless, according to (Yuden, 2022), Sonam MaekayPenjor, the chairman of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB), expressed his opinion that now that the establishment has officially opened and adopted the slogan "Believe," he is confident that both tourists and residents alike will experience a brighter, stronger, wealthier, and more inclusive Bhutan for both tourists and locals.

On the global scale, a study conducted by Bich et al (2021) at Khanh Hoa Province in Vietnam, the authors stated that COVID-19 epidemic occurred at the same time as the Chinese and Russian tourism industries saw a quick drop and that they are trying to raise the standard of tourism growth by enhancing the average visitor expenditure. Similarly, Rinzin et al., 2007) in his study of Ecotourism as a mechanism for sustainable development: the case of Bhutan, illustrated that Bhutan guided by the overarching principle of 'high value, low impact', has consequently pursued a strategy of "controlled liberalization" for the development of its tourism industry. His study has shown that the country's government advances the economy and distribute the gains to the more rural areas where the local communities respond very positively to tourists visiting their communities. Nevertheless, he also stated that today's difficulty is in promoting more development while still preserving desirable qualities (such as nature, culture, and exclusivity) and improving the distribution of economic gains.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Introduction**

In this final chapter, the researcher presented Conclusion followed by the Recommendations of the study.

### **Conclusion**

This study reviewed the Social Exchange Theory in an effort to better understand how Community Based Sustainable Tourism was perceived by the community of Gangteng and PhobjiGeogs. It also explored the Social and Economic Impacts, Challenges, and Interventions of CBST. The researcher employed Convergent Parallel method approach and pragmatic paradigm. Mixed methods of data collection such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Survey Interview Questions (Qualitative), and Field Survey Questionnaires (Quantitative) were formulated.

From the study, it was found that, there is a significant high positive perception of the community towards CBST. The majority of local communities report that there are normally no negative effects on their culture as a result of tourists visiting their areas. However, in recent years, reports of congestion during the peak tourist season have been made at some of the most popular cultural events and along several trekking routes (Rinzin et al., 2007). The statement was made obvious with the recent reopening of the border gates of Bhutan, where the tourists trudged into the pristine valley of Phobjikha.

The project's Economic effects have the ability to indirectly improve the quality of life of the community reducing the hurdles of the farmers on a local scale in the short- to medium-term, laying the groundwork for more sustainable future projects. The optimistic assessments of the project's future clearly depend on its ability to maintain its sustainability and to resolve some of the significant issues that have been brought up, like the Management of Waste and improving its capacity to facilitate further growth while at the same time maintaining the attractive features (nature, culture, and exclusiveness) and enhancing wider distribution of the economic benefits.

In doing so, and within the parameters and constraints of the study, it can be said that CBST project can take into account all potential effects of tourism interventions when looking for development strategies, and that CBST, when properly planned and implemented, has the potential to have real positive effects.

### **Recommendations**

This study presents various findings pertaining to the Perceptions, Social and Economic Impacts, Challenges and Interventions of Community Based Sustainable Tourism from the community of Gangteng and PhobjiGeogs of Wangduephodrang. It is evident from this study that there are opportunities for different stakeholders of CBST to work towards improving the quality of life of the community by using their potentials and skills and make the development progress in the valley a sustainable one.

#### **Recommendation to Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN)**

In line with the findings of the study, waste management was seen as a critical issue from the past and is still escalating with the rapid increase in number of visitors. A sustainable plan by RSPN for creating an awareness and an effective management of waste generation was observed as deemed necessary. Thus, RSPN should re-examine their plan and create a strategy for managing waste.

As reported in the study, positive perceptions and positive Social and economic impacts in the valley of Phobjikha are brought about by CBST. Thus, Transparency, Accountability, Efficiency and Effectiveness of CBST needs timely monitoring and reports from RSPN and the CBST Committee that can update the status of its success and failure in this dynamic world of Tourism which depends on various factors.

### **Recommendation to the Local Government**

As reported in the study, Social and Economic development of the community is up scaling with time. So, if a road map of the tourism development that involves stakeholders of CBST could be provided by the local government, it would benefit the community, to be more active in providing an assessment of tourism activities and if there is a potential for harm, it can be handled immediately.

### **Recommendation to Tourism Council of Bhutan**

The Strategy of Community Based Sustainable Tourism **Community** is a tourism that focuses on the community as the subject as well as the object of organizing tourism activities. So, if TCB could empower the community to recognize the problems faced and identify their potential by providing tourism trainings and promoting sustainable tourism policies, so that they can develop a form of tourism that suits their needs.

### **Recommendation for the Community**

A need to improve the quality of tourism products is observed. Tourism products need planning to demonstrate the scale, cultural identity, and identity of local cuisine. Food service always needs to be associated with typical and traditional local products along with ensuring reasonable price, service style, hygiene and safety (Tien, 2018).

### **Recommendation for the Future Research**

This research still needs further study, especially related to the applicability of the community-based sustainable tourism model and its application stages.

Future studies should address governmental support and relief programmes to support the quick recovery of small rural tourism enterprises including community-based homestays during and after post-COVID-19 crises, consequently contributing to sustainable tourism development.

### **List of Abbreviations**

CBST	Community Based Sustainable Tourism
RSPN	Royal Society for Protection of Nature
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science

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