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DIAMANTINA: A COMMUNITY-BASED
TOURISM EXPERIENCE THROUGH
LOCAL PERSPECTIVES**

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ABSTRACT

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a model of tourism that aims to enhance the natural and cultural value of the environment while striving for social equity and improved quality of life for vulnerable groups often exposed to conventional tourism projects. This study analyzed community tourism in rural settlements in Itaetê, Bahia, focusing on the "Em Cantos da Chapada Diamantina" tourist route developed by ICMBIO. The research characterized the studied communities to understand their history and current context, analyzed tourism practices, assessed adherence to community tourism principles, and identified each community's potential and challenges in adopting CBT. Indicators were established to measure the settlements' compliance with CBT principles. Using a mixed-methods approach, exploratory research was conducted on three case studies in Itaetê: the Baixão, Europa, and Rozely Nunes settlements. Results indicate that the communities generally adhere to ICMBio's CBT principles, with primary challenges relating to basic education infrastructure and professional training implementation. Recommendations include strengthening community management across all settlements, ensuring residents maintain leadership in tourism operations. This research contributes to the understanding of CBT organization and implementation in Bahia.

Keywords: Community tourism. Rural settlements. Governance. Sustainability.

RESUMO

O Turismo de Base Comunitária (TBC) é um modelo de atividade turística que busca a valorização natural e cultural do ambiente e tem como pressuposto a conquista da equidade social e da qualidade de vida para grupos sociais em estado de vulnerabilidade e expostos a projetos turísticos convencionais. O objetivo geral deste trabalho foi analisar o turismo comunitário em assentamentos rurais do município de Itaetê, Bahia, a partir do roteiro turístico denominado “Em Cantos da Chapada Diamantina” desenvolvido pelo ICMBIO. O caminho de análise compreendeu a caracterização das comunidades estudadas para entender seu percurso e contexto atual, a análise da prática da atividade turística, a verificação do nível de adequação aos princípios do turismo comunitário e, por fim, a identificação das potencialidades e dos desafios de cada comunidade quanto à adoção do TBC. Para analisar a prática turística foram estabelecidos indicadores que mensuraram o nível de cumprimentos dos assentamentos aos princípios do TBC. Com base em uma perspectiva metodológica quali-quantitativa foi realizada uma pesquisa exploratória tendo como objeto três estudos de caso localizados em Itaetê: os assentamentos Baixão, Europa e Roseli Nunes. Como resultado da análise nota-se que as comunidades se adéquam aos princípios do TBC estabelecidos pelo ICMBio, sendo que os principais desafios se referem à estruturação da educação básica e à implementação de capacitações profissionais. Recomenda-se, para todas, o fortalecimento da gestão comunitária, mantendo o protagonismo dos assentados na condução do turismo. Esta pesquisa contribuiu para a compreensão de como o TBC é organizado e conduzido na Bahia.

Palavras-chaves: Assentamentos Rurais. Governança. Sustentabilidade. Turismo comunitário.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of tourism, mass tourism remains the dominant model, particularly in developing countries. This form of tourism typically isolates visitors in artificial environments, detached from local communities, offering experiences with limited authenticity (Araújo & Carvalho, 2013). Its primary goal is to captivate tourists by commodifying all attractions. However, this tourism model has been increasingly generating adverse effects, resulting in the degradation of the very destinations it seeks to promote (Castro, 2009).

In this context, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) emerges as an innovative tourism model. CBT strives for economic efficiency by emphasizing cultural identities and environmental conservation. It aims to enhance both natural and cultural environments while preserving the authenticity of host communities. This sustainable approach to tourism is particularly suited for communities interested in welcoming visitors in an environmentally and culturally responsible manner.



CBT presents an alternative approach to tourism, grounded in the environmental, social, and cultural values of a destination, while complementing rather than replacing conventional tourism (Moraes; Irving; Mendonça, 2018). This form of tourism aims to bolster local economies, create employment opportunities, and foster business ventures that contribute to regional development. Moreover, by facilitating meaningful interactions between visitors and local residents, CBT promotes a deeper appreciation of regional cultures and traditions, ultimately encouraging sustainable community growth.

In 2011, the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBIO) introduced a community-based tourism model in traditional Brazilian communities. This initiative aimed to provide an additional source of income while fostering local development through youth engagement, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship (ICMBIO, 2018). By 2018, this program had reached several communities, including Baixão, Europa, and Rozely Nunes, all situated in Itaetê, a municipality bordering the Chapada Diamantina National Park in Bahia state.

Given that community-based tourism prioritizes local empowerment by combining the importance of valuing indigenous knowledge with the social dynamics of the destination, it is crucial to examine whether the communities comprising the Em Cantos da Chapada route are conducting tourism activities in accordance with CBT principles or if they are leaning towards conventional tourism practices. To address these questions, this study presents a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of community-based tourism initiatives in these three communities.

Considering this theme, the research aims to analyze community-based tourism in rural settlements within the municipality of Itaetê, Bahia, focusing on the tourist route “Em Cantos da Chapada Diamantina” developed by ICMBIO. To achieve this, the study first characterizes the communities, examining their historical development and current context. It then analyzes tourism activities within these communities and assesses how well each aligns with Community-Based Tourism (CBT) principles. Finally, the research identifies the strengths and challenges faced by each community in relation to their tourism practices.

This study examines tourism as more than just an economic endeavor, recognizing its role as a social practice that impacts both the environment and societal culture. Through an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating concepts and theories from economic, social, and natural sciences, the research provides insights into the complex interactions between tourist activities and settled communities.



CONCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY TOURISM

Territory plays a crucial role in regional development, particularly in the context of tourism. The organization and planning of a specific area can significantly impact visitor attraction and the economic, social, and environmental consequences of tourism in the region. Since the 20th century, growing environmental and social concerns have fostered an ecological consciousness in society, prompting a reevaluation of how territories are used. These environmental discussions and reflections have given rise to innovative approaches for developing economic activities rooted in sustainability principles (Oliveira; Gontijo, 2012). Consequently, there is now a concerted effort to preserve natural environments while respecting and maintaining local cultural heritage.

From a tourism perspective, Ruschmann (2013) examines the impacts on the culture and landscapes of tourist destinations, drawing from studies conducted with increased frequency and observational depth. This research raises societal awareness about the critical importance of integrating environmental considerations into tourism practices. This paradigm shift extends to both tourism research and practice, fostering the exploration of harmonious interactions among visitors, local communities, and the natural environment.

During the 1960s and 1970s, alternative tourism emerged as a counterpoint to mass tourism, seeking a balance between exploitation and conservation of visited destinations (Oliveira & Gontijo, 2012). The 1980s saw the rise of a new type of tourist, for whom nature and its elements became the primary attractions, driven by a desire for contact, discovery, and adventure (Ruschmann, 2013). This shift required a new approach to tourism. Consequently, tourism demand became more sophisticated, with visitors seeking greater knowledge and engagement with the cultural and environmental aspects of their destinations.

In light of this emerging form of tourism, Barros and Leuzinger (2020) underscore the critical role of tourism management in preserving wildlife biodiversity, raising environmental awareness, and encouraging the establishment of protected areas. Consequently, strategic planning in tourism is essential for mitigating environmental degradation while simultaneously contributing to territorial conservation through enhanced ecological consciousness and the promotion of societal well-being.



The organization of tourism activities within a territory significantly influences its economic, social, and environmental development. The community-based tourism model is founded on the environmental, social, and cultural values of a destination, enabling economic efficiency through the promotion of cultural identities and environmental conservation. CBT aims to achieve social equity and improve the quality of life for vulnerable social groups often marginalized by conventional tourism projects. Cabanilla (2018) notes that while conceptualizing this specific activity has been a learning process, it is crucial to disseminate the idea of CBT as “[...] a management model for a social enterprise, whose primary goal is not the economic return for shareholders, but rather the generation of positive impacts distributed among community members [...]” (Cabanilla, 2018, p.122).

According to Moraes et al. (2020), CBT distinguishes itself from conventional tourism approaches by departing from market-driven logic. Instead, it is intrinsically tied to local practices and embraces the diversity of knowledge and stakeholders. This complexity necessitates a deeper understanding of sociocultural dynamics. In academic circles, CBT is variably perceived as either a subset of ecotourism or as an innovative tourism paradigm.

In recent decades, the community-based tourism model has been implemented and refined worldwide, offering diverse attractions and visitor experiences. CBT presents an opportunity to empower rural, fishing, quilombola, and indigenous communities, fostering new local economic dynamics rooted in respect for local culture and ecosystems. For these communities to thrive within this model, effective community management is paramount (Matilaine et al., 2018; Lee & Jan, 2019; Dluzewska & Giampiccoli, 2020; Cáceres-Feria, Hernández-Ramírez & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2021).



CBT EXPERIENCES IN RURAL SETTLEMENTS

In the 2000s, a new movement emerged in rural Brazil, as novel activities and services complemented traditional rural pursuits, introducing a fresh dynamic to the countryside (Donari et al., 2005). This reorganization of rural spaces gave rise to the concept of economic pluralism in rural areas (Ramiro & Dias, 2011), fostering new work practices and income sources, including tourism.

Rural tourism emerges as a dual-purpose phenomenon: firstly, to fulfill people's longing for closer connections with nature and rural life, and secondly, as an alternative revenue stream for diverse rural properties. This trend initially captivated large estates, leading to the establishment of numerous farm hotels (Donari et al, 2005). Subsequently, it expanded to family-owned agricultural properties, which began offering products and services to visitors, developing sophisticated business strategies to position themselves within the competitive tourism destination market.

Beyond traditional rural properties, tourism has been expanding into agrarian reform settlements. Donari *et al.* (2005) explain that incorporating these settlements as visitor destinations allows tourists to experience the settler community's daily life, rural expertise, and local knowledge. This interaction fosters social integration and cultural appreciation of these communities (Maia; Gomes, 2020). Additional benefits include the development of accommodation, dining, entertainment, and local product marketing services, which stimulates the creation of small family businesses, independent entrepreneurships, cooperatives, and associations, thereby contributing to regional development (Giannini, 2017). Moreover, tourism emerges as an alternative income source, mitigating daily challenges caused by the absence of effective rural-focused public policies (Sousa; Viegas, 2013).

Numerous researchers (Giannini, 2017; Kukiel, Costa; Mariani, 2016; Maia; Gomes, 2020; Martins; Fudemma, 2013; Pires, 2019; Ramiro; Romero, 2016) assert that tourism can serve as a tool for the development and sustainability of settlements, capable of fostering economic and social changes while promoting environmental preservation. While tourism brings new opportunities to settlements, it is crucial to acknowledge that alongside positive impacts, negative consequences also arise from tourist activities (Maia; Gomes, 2020). In this context, several researchers (Kukiel, Costa e Mariani, 2016; Pires, 2019; Ramiro e Romero,



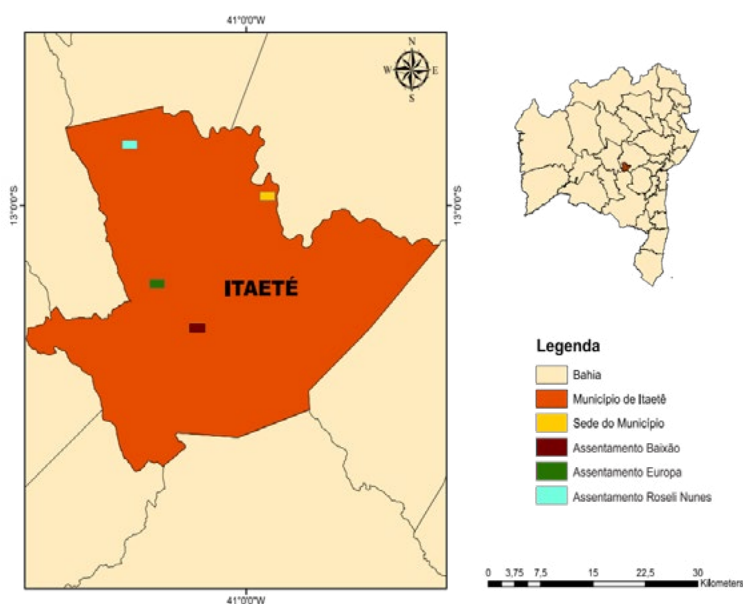
2016) advocate for the implementation of community-based tourism models in settlements as a means to mitigate the associated negative impacts.

In Brazil, CBT is present in numerous rural settlements, serving as a means to supplement income and add value to existing activities (Ramiro & Dias, 2011). Rural communities, whether proximate to or distant from tourist centers, strive to develop responsible tourism initiatives based on the community tourism model. This model prerequisites community autonomy in managing activities that align with their aspirations while respecting socio-environmental preservation. Consequently, this study concurs with Giannini's (2017) assertion that CBT represents a viable and profitable alternative for rural settlements.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted across three rural settlements: Rozeli Nunes, Europa, and Baixão (Figure 1), situated in the municipality of Itaetê in central Bahia state. These communities primarily rely on family farming for their economic sustenance, with community-based tourism recently emerging as a supplementary source of income (ICMBIO, 2018).

Figure 1 | Location of the Em Cantos da Chapada settlements, municipality of Itaetê, Bahia.



Source: Lead author, 2022.

According to residents, the Rozeli Nunes settlement originated from the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), which peacefully occupied the farm. It was the first of the three studied settlements to be regularized by the National Agrarian Reform Program in 1996 (INCRA, 2022). The community offers visitors various tourist attractions, including the Invernada waterfall with its access trail, the Una River, the Enchanted Well, and Lapa do Bode. Additionally, visitors can explore a traditional flour mill, sample local cuisine, and purchase locally-made handicrafts.

Europa, legalized in 1998 (INCRA, 2022), was the second settlement to be officially recognized. It resulted from a peaceful occupation and retained the name of the expropriated farm, honoring a local bee species. According to ICMBIO (2018), the settlement boasts several attractions: the Roncador, Herculano, and Bom Jardim waterfalls with their hiking trails; traditional sertaneja cuisine; productive home gardens; the Una River; an artisanal rapadura (raw sugar cake) factory; local handicrafts; and the Casa do Jarê, a Candomblé place of worship.

The final settlement along the route, known as Baixão, was the last to receive official recognition from INCRA in 1999 (INCRA, 2022). This area contributes several attractions to the tourist itinerary, including the Encantada waterfall and canyon, hiking trails, ancient rock art, a traditional manioc flour production facility, authentic sertanejo cuisine, manioc-derived products, and locally crafted artisanal goods (ICMBIO, 2018).

These three communities successfully responded to the 2018 Call for Proposals aimed at Strengthening Community-Based Tourism Initiatives and were chosen by ICMBIO. Subsequently, they embarked on a comprehensive process of planning and organizing tourism activities. Through collaborative efforts, they curated local attractions and developed the "Hidden Gems of Chapada Diamantina" tour itinerary. Their goal was to create a unique tourism product that seamlessly blends the natural wonders and rich historical-cultural heritage of the settlements, while simultaneously enhancing the self-esteem and overall quality of life for all community hosts involved.



MATERIAL AND METHODS

To review the concepts, principles, and guidelines of CBT, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, focusing on key authors and institutions specializing in this tourism modality (Albuquerque, 2020; Giannini, 2017; Cabanilla, 2018; Irving, 2018; Cáceres-Feria, Hernández-Ramírez, & Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2021; ICMBIO, 2018). Additionally, data was collected from the websites of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and ICMBIO. The gathered information pertains to documentary evidence on community-based tourism and the municipality of Itaeté, specifically addressing these aspects: history, demographics, official status of settlements, and economic activities.

Following the Ethics Committee's approval of the project, as registered by the Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation (CAAE) No. 56329322.2.0000.5526 two field visits were conducted: the first in April 2022 and the second in June of the same year. These visits focused on participatory observation and primary data collection through semi-structured questionnaires, allowing interviewees to express their opinions on the progress of tourism activities. A total of 24 residents from three settlements were interviewed: eight from Roseli Nunes, ten from Europa, and six from Baixão. Sampling was not necessary for this tool's application, as it was possible to include all members of the three communities directly involved in tourism services. These participants included settlers engaged in trail guiding, tourist accommodation, meal preparation and/or artistic and cultural activities within their communities.

The third phase involved assessing each community's alignment with ICMBIO's Community-Based Tourism principles. Research dimensions were employed to evaluate tourism in the studied locations, utilizing indicators presented in Table 1. These indicators were derived from literature on sustainability and community-based tourism, providing a comprehensive framework for analysis.



Table 1 | Indicators that evaluated each dimension of Community-Based Tourism (CBT).

Dimension	Indicators	Indicator Reference
D1 – Conservation of socio-biodiversity	Garbage collection	Pinheiro (2014)
	Selective garbage collection	Hanai (2009)
	Sewage treatment	Hanai (2009)
	Reduction in energy and water consumption	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021) / Hanai (2009)
	Agroecological production techniques	Hanai (2009)
	Generation of income and opportunities for community inhabitants	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Support for community training and participation in tourism activities	Hanai (2009)
D2 – Valuing history and culture	Existence of cultural and historical aspects of the group	Hanai (2009)
	Knowledge of local history and culture	Hanai (2009)
	Existence of entities and institutions that promote culture	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
D3 – Community protagonism	Existence of foreign ownership of local enterprises	Hanai (2009)
	Connection between communities	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Leadership in communities / Representation	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Existence of participatory planning	Albuquerque (2016)
	Existence of a common objective that represents the group	Albuquerque (2016)
D4 – Social equity	Benefits are redistributed to support health, education and social infrastructure	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Economic support for vulnerable groups	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Creates a market for selling local services and products	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Existence of social plans and projects linked to tourism	Hanai (2009)
D5 – Common good	Improves the quality of life of the community	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Existence of collaborative and supportive actions	Albuquerque (2016)
	Existence of a mechanism for conflict management	Albuquerque (2016)

D6 – Transparency	Existence of an accountability mechanism	Albuquerque (2016)
	Information dissemination channels	Albuquerque (2016)
	Provision of documents (reports, minutes, plans, etc.) for TBC participants	Albuquerque (2016)
D7 – Cultural dynamism	Existence of interaction between local crafts and tourist activity	Hanai (2009)
	Valuing typical dishes through the gastronomic offer	Hanai (2009)
	Tolerates other cultures, respects them for better coexistence	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Promotion of traditional events and festivities with typical demonstrations	Hanai (2009)
D8 – Complementary activity	Variety of services	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Training in environmental, agricultural and other knowledge	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Initiatives that allow dealing with seasonality	Hanai (2009)
	Studies and promotion for sustainable development	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
D9 – Education	Professional training program	Hanai (2009)
	Environmental education program	Hanai (2009)
	Qualified tour guide	Hanai (2009)
	Literacy of the adult population	Pinheiro (2014)
	Development of participants involved in community-based tourism activity	Albuquerque (2016)
D10 – Continuity	Tourist infrastructure	Calle-Calderón; Duque (2021)
	Visibility	Pinheiro (2014)
	Actions focused on disseminating values, symbols and attitudes relating to the collective protagonism present in the destination	Albuquerque (2016)

Source: Elaborated by the author (2022).



The indicators were derived from primary data collection using semi-structured questionnaires. These were subsequently tabulated and analyzed using the Rensis Likert model, which enables the measurement of attitudes in Social Sciences (Matas, 2018), converting subjective opinions into quantifiable data. The questionnaire responses were then used to calculate the Average Ranking (AR) as proposed by Oliveira (2005), using the following formula:

$$\text{Sub Dn} = (\text{Fdt} \cdot 1 + \text{Fdp} \cdot 2 + \text{Fdc} \cdot 3 + \text{Fcp} \cdot 4 + \text{Fct} \cdot 5) / \text{Total answers in Dn}$$

in which:

D 'n' = Dimension identification;

Sub Dn = Subindex of Dimension 'n';

Fdt = frequency of "strongly disagree" responses for Dimension 'n' statements;

Fdp = frequency of the answer "partially disagree" for the statements in Dimension 'n';

Fdc = frequency of the answer "I don't know" for the statements in Dimension 'n';

Fcp = frequency of "partially agree" answers for Dimension 'n' statements;

Fct = frequency of "totally agree" answers for Dimension 'n' statements;

Total answers in Dn = total number of questions answered in Dimension 'n'.

The index ranges from 1 to 5. A score closer to 5 indicates that the analyzed dimension successfully adheres to CBT principles, while a score closer to 1 suggests that CBT principles are not being adequately implemented.

To assess each community's suitability for community-based tourism, the General Index of Adequacy for Community Tourism (IATC) was used, calculated as the arithmetic mean of 10 sub-indices.

$$\text{IATC} = \text{Sub} (\text{D1} + \text{D2} + \text{D3} + \text{D4} + \text{D5} + \text{D6} + \text{D7} + \text{D8} + \text{D9} + \text{D10}) / 10$$

The Community-Based Tourism Index (IATC) assesses how effectively communities implement the Community-Based Tourism model. The IATC uses a scale from 1 to 5, where a score closer to 1 indicates that a community is further from CBT principles, while a score closer to 5 suggests stronger alignment with these principles. The research concluded with a comprehensive analysis, presenting a synthesis table that bridges theoretical concepts with practical community tourism applications. This approach enables the identification of each community's strengths and challenges in developing and sustaining tourism activities.



RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To analyze the implementation of CBT in the Em Cantos Da Chapada itinerary, it was essential to consider the founding principles. The settlements developed their tourist routes with guidance and support from ICMBIO, these principles formed the basis for creating research indicators and questions. This approach enabled the dimensioning of indicators, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 | Sub-indices of the dimensions of settlements in the municipality of Itaetê /BA, 2022

Dimension	Roseli Nunes		Europa		Baixão	
	Sublevel by dimension	Classification	Sublevel by dimension	Classification	Sublevel by dimension	Classification
(D1) Conservation of socio-biodiversity	4	Potentially satisfactory	4,1	Potentially satisfactory	4,2	Potentially satisfactory
(D2) Valuing history and culture	4,6	Fully satisfactory	4,6	Fully satisfactory	4,9	Fully satisfactory
(D3) Community protagonism	3,8	Potentially satisfactory	4,3	Fully satisfactory	4,2	Potentially satisfactory
(D4) Social equity	3,6	Potentially satisfactory	4,2	Potentially satisfactory	4,4	Fully satisfactory
(D5) Common good	4,3	Fully satisfactory	4,7	Fully satisfactory	4,8	Fully satisfactory
(D6) Transparency	4	Potentially satisfactory	4,4	Fully satisfactory	4,9	Fully satisfactory
(D7) Cultural dynamism	4,6	Fully satisfactory	4,8	Fully satisfactory	4,7	Fully satisfactory
(D8) Complementary activity	4	Potentially satisfactory	4,1	Potentially satisfactory	4,7	Fully satisfactory
(D9) Educação	4,2	Potentially satisfactory	2,7	Neutral	4,5	Fully satisfactory
(D10) Continuity	4,5	Fully satisfactory	4,8	Fully satisfactory	4,9	Fully satisfactory

Source: Research data (2022).



Table 2 reveals that no communities were categorized as “unsatisfactory” or “partially satisfactory”. This suggests that respondents perceive existing challenges as minor and readily surmountable.

Furthermore, the three analyzed communities exhibit relative similarities in aspects of conservation, sociobiodiversity, historical and cultural appreciation, cultural dynamism, and continuity, all of which are managed satisfactorily within these environments. This demonstrates that these communities value the interaction between their natural and cultural elements and visitors. Silva (2021) notes that this aspect attracts tourists seeking authentic experiences with local hosts, while also benefiting the territory and resident families. Sousa and Viegas (2013) emphasize that such elements of cultural appreciation and revival are crucial factors in developing rural tourism.

Two items stand out due to the disparity in results, highlighting the need for communities to align their structure and management with principles related to education and transparency. The latter is considered a crucial criterion for analyzing CBT, as it plays a pivotal role in disseminating information and establishing effective community governance (Albuquerque, 2016; ICMBIO 2018). Strengthening community management through education is also an essential criterion for community development. Promoting education fosters the development of conscious and actively participating social actors, contributing to overall community growth and sustainability (Albuquerque, 2016; ICMBIO 2018; Simões Cardoso, 2021).

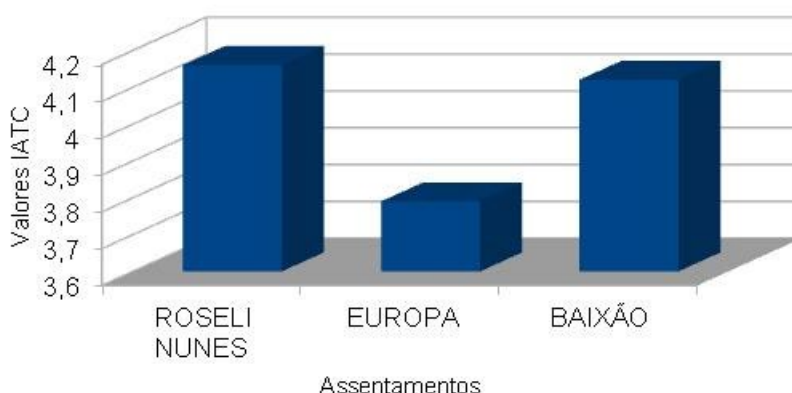
When examining the communities individually, it’s evident that the Baixão settlement achieved “fully satisfactory” ratings in most sub-indices. These findings highlight the necessity to enhance socio-biodiversity conservation methods and practices while strengthening community leadership in CBT initiatives. The Europa settlement, meanwhile, demonstrated strong performance across most dimensions, though improvements are needed in adult education access and tourism-specific training opportunities. Furthermore, the settlement should focus on: enhancing natural and social aspect conservation; promoting social equity by ensuring that community tourism yields benefits beyond financial gains, fostering advancements in various societal sectors (particularly social), and positioning tourism as a supplementary income source to prevent over-reliance on a single economic activity.



In the Rozely Nunes community, the majority of dimensions were categorized as “potentially satisfactory,” with D6 (transparency) standing out. Notably, this was the sole community where survey participants reported lacking access to tourism activity outcomes and being excluded from planning and decision-making processes. Given that CBT inherently requires universal participation, it is imperative to reassess the methods for disseminating information, results, and gatherings.

Chart 1 illustrates the General Index of Adequacy for Community Tourism (IATC), revealing how communities are embracing and implementing the Community-Based Tourism initiative.

Graph 1 | Result of the General Index of Suitability for Community Tourism (IATC) of settlements in the municipality of Itaetê/BA, 2022. Source: Research data (2022).



Source: Research data (2022).

The Europa community achieved an IATC score of 3.79, indicating its potential suitability for community-based tourism. Among the principles evaluated, “education” showed the highest level of disagreement compared to other factors analyzed across the three settlements. This suggests that the community needs to focus on transforming its current formal education structure to better include the adult population. Such proactivity will empower the community to shape its own trajectory, which requires individuals capable of operating effectively in areas where formal education is crucial. Therefore, promoting education and providing opportunities for adults to continue their studies and personal development is a fundamental element that can catalyze significant changes in these areas.

Throughout this trajectory, the research revealed that despite the three settlements being at different levels of IACT, they all align with the Community-Based Tourism model. Consequently, a summary table (Table 3) is provided, highlighting the potential and challenges these communities face in implementing community tourism.

As the culmination of our research, we developed a comprehensive summary table designed for practical community application. This table highlights the key elements that bolster community-based tourism in each locality, while also identifying the specific challenges that must be addressed to refine and optimize this tourism model.

Table 3: Summary table with the potential and challenges by community in the municipality of Itaetê/BA, 2022.

Community	Potentialities	Challenges
Roseli Nunes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has natural, cultural and historical tourist attractions. Develop hospitality It has easy access Provides an improvement in the quality of family life Promotes cultural and historical appreciation Establishes a respectful relationship when dealing with diversity of habits and customs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualify labor for tourism Establish an organization that contributes to the preservation of history and culture. Improve internal communication, especially regarding tourism results. Improve communication with the other two communities Search for ways for the benefits of tourism to be reversed into benefits for the community. Increase community participation in plans and decisions Reinforce the principles of TBC – especially in relation to complementary activities. Reinforce the importance of family farming as an economic activity. Qualify labor for agriculture. Always reinforce community leadership in the governance of tourist activity.
Europa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has natural, cultural and historical tourist attractions. Develop hospitality Provides an improvement in the quality of family life Promotes cultural and historical appreciation Establishes a respectful relationship when dealing with diversity of habits and customs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scarcity of public transport Sign local roads Qualify labor for tourism. Qualify labor for agriculture. Establish an organization that contributes to the preservation of history and culture. Create a school structure Reinforce TBC principles – especially with regard to complementary activity Always reinforce community leadership in the governance of tourist activity.

Baixão	It has natural, cultural and historical tourist attractions.	
	Develop hospitality Provides an improvement in the quality of family life Promotes cultural and historical appreciation Establishes a respectful relationship when dealing with diversity of habits and customs	Scarcity of public transport Sign local roads Qualify labor for tourism Always reinforce community leadership in the governance of tourist activity.

Source: Research data (2022)

Overall, the communities comprising the Em Cantos da Chapada Diamantina route are successfully implementing the CBT model as directed by ICMBIO. However, to fully establish this tourism model, strategic planning of local tourism initiatives is essential to convert challenges into opportunities for growth. To this end, it is recommended that a commission be formed with representatives from all three settlements. This approach will reinforce collaborative efforts towards shared goals, ultimately amplifying the influence and representation of these communities.

As highlighted in Table 3, the most pressing issues concern municipal governance, particularly in areas of educational infrastructure, rural road signage, and enhancement of public transportation services. Additionally, forging partnerships with public institutions for the training and professional development of tourism industry personnel is crucial. These initiatives demand patience and perseverance, as their outcomes are not immediate and typically manifest over medium to long-term periods.

Furthermore, additional challenges must be addressed, requiring the communities themselves to organize and review their activities. In this context, meetings for information and experience sharing are crucial, as they strengthen the bonds between stakeholders. According to research data, Europa and Rozely Nunes need to develop more effective internal communication strategies, as transparency and collective planning are fundamental to community-based tourism. Consequently, it is recommended that, in addition to WhatsApp groups, face-to-face meetings be organized for planning and information exchange, which can be integrated into existing association gatherings

The long-term sustainability of tourism in the studied communities depends on youth engagement. Strengthening participatory governance is crucial for establishing networks of mutual cooperation and stakeholder integration. Maintaining community leadership is essential to solidify these areas as tourist destinations and create value-added experiences for both hosts and visitors.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The examined communities fulfill nearly all CBT principles either “potentially satisfactorily” or “fully satisfactorily,” as evidenced by the General Community Tourism Adequacy Index (GCTAI) results. These findings indicate that two communities are “fully aligned” with this tourism model, while only one is “potentially aligned.” Consequently, the studied tourism route adheres closely to the guiding principles of CBT.

Nevertheless, certain measures are essential to enhance the participatory and community-based management of this tourist route. These include strengthening the basic education system, developing tourism-oriented vocational training programs, improving infrastructure for accessing communities, and enhancing transportation services.

Within communities, effective communication is crucial and requires careful analysis to facilitate participatory planning and ensure transparent outcomes for “collectively” determined actions and measures. Empowering community leadership in tourism management is a recommendation that should be sustained long-term.

Upon analyzing the research findings, it became crucial to comprehend how communities, despite their inexperience, successfully implemented a tourism model that diverges significantly from conventional practices. This outcome can be attributed to two key factors: the absence of preconceived notions about tourism and the implementation of community-based management strategies.

The first factor pertains to the absence of pre-existing tourism activities in the area, suggesting that the lack of experience with conventional tourism models may have facilitated a more natural and conflict-free adoption of community-based tourism principles. The second factor involves community and shared management, core principles of CBT, which require the community to self-manage tourism activities and share decision-making processes and benefits among its members. In this case, the settlements already had such organizational structures in place, evidenced by the presence of associations for collective decision-making on local issues. Consequently, this community management practice could be readily extended to tourism activities, mirroring pre-existing models used for non-tourism purposes. Thus, the combination of limited exposure to mass tourism paradigms and experience with shared self-management may have positively influenced



the successful implementation of CBT. However, these elements warrant further investigation in future studies to more definitively validate the findings presented in this research.

This study, examining the tourism activity model employed in the three rural settlements comprising the Em Cantos da Chapada route, revealed how these communities align with CBT principles. The efforts invested in structuring themselves enable such activities to have a “long life” and identify necessary adjustments along the way. Beyond the community level, implementing a sustainable tourism model like CBT can diversify the region’s economy, reducing dependence on a single income source, and contribute to natural resource conservation, mitigating environmental degradation. Consequently, community tourism proves crucial for regional development, fostering a balance between economic, social, and environmental progress.

Future research should investigate whether the settlement management model truly facilitates the implementation of community-based tourism, extending the analysis to include various types of communities. This approach will enhance our understanding of the topic and provide valuable support for CBT destinations in their self-management efforts. Moreover, community-based tourism remains a subject that requires further exploration, both in terms of its conceptual foundations and, more importantly, its practical application and operational aspects.



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