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The long-term effectiveness of a Community-Based tourism approach in Bolivia using the lens of Community Resilience.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
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Abstract

This study explores the factors that influence the long-term success of community-based tourism (CBT) projects in Bolivia and examines the degree to which CBT initiatives contribute to increased community resilience (CR). Adopting a community resilience lens, the research explores economic, social, cultural, environmental and structural indicators of resilience to investigate how participation in CBT projects impacts overall community resilience within communities. A qualitative approach was adopted, and primary data was collected through a grey literature analysis and semi-structured interviews with representatives from communities, NGOs, and tourism organisations involved in CBT within Bolivia. The data was coded and analysed using a thematic analysis in which the data was sorted by CBT success factors and the four potential indicators of CR to identify key patterns.

Findings suggest that while CBT projects can strengthen community cohesion, cultural pride and aid in economic diversification, their long-term success may be constrained by structural and institutional weaknesses. Although many communities remained dependent on NGOs for technical support and funding, projects that integrated training, partnerships with external organisations and local leadership were found to be more resilient. This study concluded that CBT could serve as a valuable pathway for strengthening CR when supported by consistent policy frameworks, long-term training and supportive governance structures. However, without addressing systemic issues such as limited infrastructure and institutional dependence, the potential of CBT to achieve enduring resilience remains restricted.

Key Words: Community-based Tourism, Community Resilience, Bolivia, Latin American Tourism.

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Abbreviations

CBT – Community-Based Tourism

CR – Community Resilience

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

ILO - International Labour Organisation

PLANTUR - The National Tourism Plan

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 . Background and Rationale

The tourism industry is a significant contributor to the global economy (Strydom et al., 2018). In 2023, the economic contribution of tourism reached an estimated USD 3.4 trillion, representing around 3% of global GDP, with an estimated 1.3 billion tourists travelling internationally in that year (International Tourism, 2025). Given its scale, tourism is widely viewed as a driver of economic development, and many countries have sought to utilise tourism as a means of development, particularly low and middle-income countries, which have promoted it to increase employment, foreign exchange earnings, and related industry growth (Khan et al., 2020).

Within this context, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and other related sustainable forms of tourism have appeared as approaches to tourism development that seek to “directly deliver the fruits of tourism to the local communities in developing countries” (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009, p.26). CBT has been promoted as a way to reduce poverty, increase conservation, strengthen cultural practices and boost local economies, particularly in rural areas (Zielinski et al., 2020). However, despite these potential benefits, many CBT initiatives seem to fail in the long term. Goodwin & Santilli (2009) argue that there appears to be a divergence between the theory and the practice of CBT. As a result, evaluation frameworks and best-practice guidelines remain contested in the literature (Shafieisabet & Haratifard, 2020).

CBT and Community Resilience (CR) are two concepts that share several characteristics, most notably a focus on community and the collective as a driver of organisational strategies aimed at promoting collaborative, fair, and balanced solutions (Gascón & Mamani, 2022). Although explicit links between CBT and CR appear to be an emerging area of research (Chontasi et al., 2022), resilience thinking has been identified as a useful theoretical-methodological approach for understanding the effects of CBT (Ruiz-Ballesteros & del Campo Tejedor, 2020). Applying a CR lens, therefore, supports this research in examining the long-term effectiveness of CBT initiatives.

Further, CR offers a holistic approach for assessing long-term community capacity, drawing attention to the uncertainty inherent in tourism (Bec et al., 2016), including short-term shocks such as natural disasters and long-term pressures like climate change (Sharifi, 2016), as well as a community's ability to adapt to political, environmental, or social stressors. This study seeks to explore the long-term sustainability of CBT projects within Bolivia, examining factors that support or hinder CBT success. Further, it will explore community resilience across four potential indicators of resilience: economic, environmental, social, and cultural.

The Bolivian and Latin American Context

CBT gained popularity in Latin America in the late 1990s, influenced by re-democratisation movements (Da Rosa et al., 2020). Latin America largely uses a network approach for CBT and has one of the most extensive offerings of this type of tourism (Mielke, 2012). This has resulted in numerous networks arising within Latin America, such as the Community Tourism Network and Red TUSOCO Bolivia (Ruiz et al., 2008, Ton & van Rijn, 2017). CBT projects have been backed within Latin America, partly due to its perceived compatibility with local cultures, especially in Andean countries, where community social structures made CBT a suitable fit (Cortez et al., 2024, Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). This perceived compatibility has prompted government-backed campaigns promoting CBT as a tool for poverty reduction and cultural and environmental protection. However, CBT projects across South America have faced challenges, including limited market access, weak internal governance, partnership management issues, and financial instability (Machaca & Leigue, 2024).

Within Bolivia, tourism has been a priority industry since 1994 (Casado, 2004). CBT has been promoted by the government since 2005 as part of a wider vision introduced with the election of Evo Morales as president (Canessa, 2014). Morales campaigned on a vision of restructuring the state, economy, and civil society in line with the values of *Vivir Bien* (Hope, 2021). CBT was viewed as compatible with this vision, shifting tourism away from private-sector control (Lima Cortez, 2010). CBT remains central to the government's tourism policy, with the most recent report, *Plan Sectorial de Desarrollo* (2020), highlighting CBT as a strategy to “acelerar el desarrollo tanto de las zonas rurales

como de las urbanas” (p.6)¹. and reduce poverty while protecting Bolivia's cultural heritage (Anthias & Radcliffe, 2015).

1.2. Research Aim, Questions and Objectives:

The main aim of this research is to:

Explore the long-term effectiveness of a Community-Based Tourism approach by projects in Bolivia through the lens of Community Resilience.

This aim is examined through the following questions:

- (1) What factors contribute to or hinder the long-term success of the examined Community-Based Tourism projects?
- (2) To what degree has the use of CBT projects resulted in more resilient communities?

1.3. Chapter Outline

Chapter 1. Introduction: This chapter provides an overview of the research, outlining the study's background, rationale, and the high failure rate of CBT projects. It introduces community resilience as the analytical lens and summarises the context of CBT in Bolivia. It also presents the aim, research questions and objectives of this research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review: This chapter reviews key literature on CBT, starting with an overview of what CBT is and the role of power and participation. It then focuses on the five most cited success factors. The second part examines community resilience, defining the concept, discussing its use in tourism, and identifying four relevant resilience indicators.

Chapter 3. Methodology: This chapter explains the qualitative approach, outlining why it was chosen. It reviews the two methods used: semi-structured interviews and grey

¹ Accelerate the development of both rural and urban areas.

literature document analysis. Finally, this chapter reviews the ethical considerations of this research and the limitations of this study.

Chapter 4. Research Findings: This chapter presents the findings from the interviews and document analysis, identifying factors supporting or hindering the long-term success of CBT projects. It also examines community resilience across four indicators, highlighting elements that strengthen or undermine resilience.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion: This chapter interprets the findings in relation to the literature, answering the two research questions through critical analysis. Finally, this chapter ends with future research recommendations and concluding remarks.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Part One: Community-Based Tourism

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature on CBT related to the research questions and aims of this thesis. It first describes CBT, highlighting debates surrounding its definition and detailing common forms of CBT within the tourism sector. Secondly, this chapter will explore the character of participation within CBT, highlighting various debates and proposed approaches to facilitating participation. This leads into the next section, which examines the role of power within CBT, highlighting both the wider power structures that may influence CBT projects, such as agendas based in neoliberalism, as well as localised power structures that may exist within a community. Finally, this chapter will focus on success factors within CBT, briefly outlining the five most mentioned success factors from the literature.

2.2. Community-Based Tourism

The concept of CBT emerged in the mid-1990s as an alternative to mass tourism. Its origins can be traced back to the 1970s and are linked to alternative development approaches (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2015, Habiba & Lina, 2023, Strydom et al., 2018). Despite its relative longevity, there seems to be no universally accepted definition of CBT. This apparent lack of cohesion in the definition of CBT is also reflected in its stated goals, which vary depending on the source, meaning the focus of the writer often guides which elements of CBT are given the greatest weight, be it indigenous, environmental protection or economic benefits (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018, Habiba & Lina, 2023). Further, within the wide-ranging definitions of CBT, there appears to be a gap between the theoretical and the practical (Dangi & Jamal, 2016, Hamzah, 2014).

As such, CBT can be understood as an umbrella term, meaning different things to different people (Yanes et al., 2019, Zielinski et al., 2021). However, there appears to be a general agreement that it is a form of tourism that seeks to embrace community development through tourism that champions the conservation of natural and cultural resources, with the project's profits remaining in the local economy and largely under local control (Dangi & Jamal, 2016, Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022, Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2023). Further, its apparent alignment with poverty-reduction agendas, potential as a catalyst for rural development and perception as a form of development that is relatively easy to implement with low capital input have seen it be embraced by many governments, NGOs and donor agencies in low and middle-income countries (Dangi & Jamal, 2016, Gantait et al., 2022, Zielinski et al., 2021). Practically, CBT products can take a wide variety of forms, from activities related to natural resources, accommodation services ranging from community-run lodges to homestay programmes, and cultural attractions (Dangi & Jamal, 2016, Habiba & Lina, 2023).

CBT's Aims are widely agreed to have the following objectives
• Empowerment of local stakeholders through ownership, planning, and/or management of tourism (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).
• Conservation of the environment, local resources, and local culture (Lee & Jan, 2019).
• Social and economic development, particularly for the most marginalised in the community (Malatji & Mtapuri, 2012).
• Producing a quality experience for tourists based on social and environmental responsibility (Mtapuri et al., 2022).

Figure 1: Widely agreed upon CBT aims (Source: author)

2.3. Participation

Community participation is frequently cited as a central element of CBT, to the extent that “the amount and nature of participation have even been used as a proxy for CBT success or failure” (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018, p.8). However, there seems to be disagreement within the literature as to what form participation should take, as not all forms of participation in tourism are equally beneficial for communities (Lee & Jan, 2019, López-Guzmán et al., 2011). Maldonado-Erazo et al. (2022) argue that participation in the context of CBT means the project should be owned, managed, and organised by the community itself; that community is the start and end of community-based tourism; and that participation that is externally invited and controlled cannot be understood as true participation (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). This point will be explored further below when looking at success factors. Another consideration raised within the literature is participation in relation to vulnerability. Lee & Jan (2019) point out that CBT development is not something that local parties can easily choose or implement. Further, achieving high community participation and control through CBT might not be realistic (Ruiz et al., 2008), as CBT often requires financial and technical resources that local communities in low and middle-income countries generally lack, and as a result, input from outside stakeholders is often required (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Further, research by Ishihara (2020) and Zielinski et al. (2021) suggests that CBT projects involving external actors are more likely to succeed. However, Giampiccoli & Saayman (2018) argue that there is a lack of consideration within the literature on the perspectives of the local community members in CBT studies. Strydom et al. (2018) suggest that a potential way to limit harm from outside input in CBT projects is through well-planned community participation. That enables locals to meaningfully participate through the removal of potential barriers such as a lack of access to information, a lack of efficient decision-making structures, a lack of discussion platforms, a lack of knowledge, and a lack of transparency and accountability (Reindrawati, 2023), as well as cultural barriers, power disparities, and conflicts of interest (Ishihara, 2020).

Further suggested approaches to participation include a network method for the development of CBT involving many stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. This approach would see local communities work with NGOs, governments, and

industry professionals to determine the amount and type of tourism that a community wants to include (Ruiz et al., 2008). Choi and Sirakaya (2006) support this approach while also arguing that policies and legal regulations relating to the development of CBT are needed, as often local governments, especially in low and middle-income countries, do not have development-related policies and regulations. Hamzah (2014) highlights a further model in Community Benefit Tourism initiatives, which is an approach to CBT that argues that the local community could benefit from tourism without having to be directly involved in it and without having to own or control the businesses. In this model, tourism businesses in rural areas need to be driven by the private sector to be successful, a view that represents a radical departure from the traditional concept of CBT.

7. Self-mobilization	←	8. Citizen control	Degrees of Citizen Power	→	<u>Spontaneous Participation</u> Bottom-up; active par.; direct participation; par. in decision making; authentic participation; self planning;
6. Interactive participation	←	7. Delegated power			
		6. Partnership			
5. Functional participation	←	5. Placation	Degrees of Citizen Tokenism	→	<u>Induced Participation</u> Top-down; passive; formal; mostly indirect; degree of tokenism; manipulation; pseudo-participation; participation in implementation and sharing benefits; choice between proposed alternatives and feedback.
4. Participation for material incentives	←	4. Consultation			
3. Participation by consultation	←	3. Informing			
2. Passive participation	←	2. Therapy	Non-participation	→	<u>Coercive Participation</u> Top-down, passive; mostly indirect, formal; participation in implementation, but not necessarily sharing benefits; choice between proposed limited alternatives or no choice; paternalism, non-participation, high degree of tokenism and manipulation.
1. Manipulative participation	←	1. Manipulation			
Pretty's (1995) typology of community participation	Arnstein's (1971) typology of community participation			Tosun's (1999a) typology of community participation	

Keys: Corresponding categories in each typology → ←

Figure 2: Normative typologies of community participation

(Community Participation in the Management of Wechiau Community Hippo Sanctuary, Ghana, 2020, p.6)

2.4. Power and CBT

The potential necessity for outside assistance within CBT makes power an important consideration. Cornelisse (2020) argues that a root cause of insufficient participation of locals in CBT is derived from an unequal power balance between the community and other stakeholders. This can lead to a CBT project adhering to a top-down development model (Ishihara, 2020); as outside actors have a higher degree of power, they are more able to engage in opportunistic behaviour and potentially influence other stakeholders, such as local government (Zielinski et al., 2021). Hence, government involvement is often vital, as governments can develop policy frameworks that guide the implementation and management of CBT activities with the active participation of all relevant stakeholders (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2015, Ishihara, 2020). A further consideration of power within CBT is authenticity, as authenticity is often a major selling point of CBT; it is relevant, then, to ask who determines what authenticity in tourism is (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2020). As Cornelisse (2020) argues, “in order to determine whether something is authentic ... a person or an authority needs to have a certain status. Status is always related to power issues” (p.439). It is worth then asking how stakeholders claim constructions of ethnicity and culture, and how key stakeholders try to legitimise them.

Zielinski et al. (2021) further critique the literature on CBT, arguing that much of it takes an a-theoretical and a-political approach to the concept of community. As Mtapuri et al. (2022) explain, the community is often presented as a homogeneous group that is expected to share common goals, while little attention is given to the potential presence of power struggles, structural inequalities, or differing values within the community (Dodds et al., 2018, Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2023). Meanwhile, Saayman & Giampiccoli (2016,) argue “CBT's conceptual and practical milieu has been shifted/hijacked by the neoliberal agenda in theory and in practice” (p.145). Concern has consequently been expressed that CBT literature is based on Western perspectives and knowledge. A neoliberal framework of tourism positions it as a tool for fighting poverty, premised on the assumption that tourism development indelibly leads to economic growth. As Blackstock (2005) highlights, CBT literature is often focused on sustaining the tourism industry, and much of the literature does not challenge or question the industry's development; in this context, CBT is then presented as a way of ensuring the survival of

a profitable tourism industry rather than empowering local residents. This conceptualisation is at odds with community development's commitment to social justice and empowerment (Cornelisse, 2020, Malatji & Mtapuri, 2012, Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2020).

2.5. Community-Based Tourism Success Factors

Given the lack of a universal concept and formula for developing CBT within the literature, and the low success rate of CBT projects in practice, there is a push amongst researchers to define success factors within CBT (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2015, Saayman & Giampiccoli, 2016). It has been suggested that this lack of guidelines or frameworks for successful CBT development is at the root of its failure in application (Habiba & Lina, 2023), as comparative analysis of case studies and understanding of facilitators and barriers to success becomes difficult to conduct without a clear framework (Dodds et al., 2018). A further challenge also arises in the acknowledgement that each community has unique circumstances, meaning a universal criterion for CBT success may not be fully possible. However, within the literature, there seems to be increased agreement that several critical conditions define the success or failure of an initiative; this gap may be closed by identifying the crucial elements that support CBT in various contexts (Habiba & Lina, 2023, Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2023, Zielinski et al., 2021).

Dangi & Jamal (2016) argue that whether a country is considered rich or poor is a relevant factor in understanding a CBT project's failure or success. Hamzah (2014) highlights the difference between CBT in high income countries and low and middle-income countries, arguing that those undertaking CBT in low and middle-income countries likely face greater challenges from a range of factors, including weaker infrastructure, lower levels of formal education, limited access to information to effectively engage in tourism and the lack of consistent and verifiable impact data (Lucchetti & Font, 2013). An example of this is Santa Rosa in the Yacuma region of Bolivia, which developed largely without formal planning. A 2013 study of this CBT project found that locals' lack of knowledge of tourism operations and the local government's inadequate management of the project

had led to a number of poor practices, which included petting, feeding, and hunting wild animals (Arze & Holladay, 2017).

Given the limited scope of this report, success factors have been limited to the five most commonly mentioned within the reviewed literature. Further, these five factors have been selected since their absence has also been identified as a potential factor for failure within a CBT project. Each of these factors will be briefly explored below.

From reviewing the literature on the potential success factors within CBT, the five most commonly mentioned were:

Factor 1. Training and skill building of local stakeholders' knowledge of the tourism industry.

Factor 2. Partnership with External Agents and Collaboration Amongst Stakeholders.

Factor 3. Integration of Community Values, promoting Local Governance and Participation.

Factor 4. Ensuring the financial viability of CBT programmes.

Factor 5. Type of tourism offered.

This graph shows which factor was mentioned in each reference:

Reference	Factor 1 mentioned	Factor 2 mentioned	Factor 3 mentioned	Factor 4 mentioned	Factor 5 mentioned
Habiba & Lina (2023)		✓		✓	
Maldonado-Erazo et al. (2020)		✓	✓		
Saayman & Giampiccoli (2016)		✓		✓	✓
(Lee & Jan, 2019)	✓		✓		
(Gantait et al., 2022a)			✓		✓
(Dangi & Jamal, 2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(Mtapuri et al., 2022)		✓	✓	✓	✓
(da Rosa et al., 2020)			✓		
(Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018)	✓	✓	✓		✓
(Yanes et al., 2019)	✓		✓	✓	

(Mielke, 2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
(Lucchetti & Font, 2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(Zielinski et al., 2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
(Dodds et al., 2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(Barbieri et al., 2020)			✓		
(Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022)			✓		
(Cornelisse, 2020)	✓		✓		✓
(Ishihara, 2020)			✓		

Figure 3: CBT Success Factors Identified in the Literature (Source: author)

Success Factors

Training and Skill Building of Local Stakeholders' Knowledge of the Tourism Industry

A lack of knowledge of the tourism industry has been identified as a major limitation that local communities face when implementing tourism projects (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). As such, education and training of locals are identified as key components for the success of CBT projects, which may include courses focusing on hospitality and tourism management at the community level, as well as general business skills such as marketing, communication, finance, or governance (Jasrotia & Gangotia, 2020, López-Guzmán et al., 2011). Habiba and Lina (2023) suggest that this process should be dynamic, as the training needs of locals are likely to be ongoing and change over time. Further, training should be set up in a way that is long-term in nature and caters to different skill levels. Importantly, adequate training for local people has been shown to enhance local involvement and participation in CBT projects, as well as improve the overall tourism product (López-Guzmán et al., 2011).

An example of skill building within CBT is the Chalalán Ecolodge, which is located in Rurrenabaque and is regarded as one of the more successful CBT projects in Bolivia. It was started in 1994 by the community of San Jose de Uchupiamonas, who applied to the

Inter-American Development Bank for funds with which to build an ecolodge. The project's success is largely attributed to the engagement with local consultants with a private sector background at the implementation stage. These consultants worked full-time within the community for two years. During this time, they provided training in accounting, lodge management, cooking, natural history, sales, and other activities. Further, a target market was identified, prices set, and an itinerary, logo, and brochure were created (Coarite & Garcia, 2023, Gantait et al., 2022, Reindrawati, 2023).

Partnership With External Agents and Collaboration Amongst Stakeholders

It is frequently argued in the literature that collaboration with external agents lowers the risk of failure for CBT. It is posited that achieving long-term success in CBT requires the presence of strong networking platforms, networking between the community, and supporting public and private actors, such as tour operators and non-profit organisations (Barbieri et al., 2020, Habiba & Lina, 2023). Mielke (2012) highlights that the communities involved in CBT are often excluded from the formal economy and are often not able to effectively engage with the tourism market, as they may lack many of the skills and knowledge required to participate in tourism. Giampiccoli & Saayman (2018) suggest that creating market linkages should be done at the planning stage, allowing the project to develop a market-ready product and a marketing strategy. This has been shown to be a key to success in CBT development, as it is critical to be able to reach intended clients and intermediaries (López-Guzmán et al., 2011). Further, collaboration with governments, NGOs and the private sector to ensure commercial viability is crucial (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). For example, research has shown that CBT initiatives are more likely to succeed when tour operators are involved from the outset. Tour operators can bring essential knowledge of the local market that can be crucial when developing a CBT project (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018, Hamzah, 2014).

An example of the above is an ecolodge project in Tomarapi within Sajama National Park, Bolivia, a project that was developed by two German organisations at an initial expenditure of USD \$150,000. The local community supported the project and was involved from beginning to end, with 26 out of 41 families agreeing to be involved. The ecolodge pays for staff training from Millenarian Tours, a locally owned tourism company

based in La Paz. Further, this project has benefited the wider community, as other members of the community also sell alpaca wool products to tourists (Arze & Holladay, 2017). Further, one of the original families withdrew from Tomarapi and built their own lodge at the nearby hot springs; both of these lodges are currently still in business (*Albergue Ecoturístico Tomarapi*, n.d.).

Integration of Community Values, Promoting Local Governance and Participation

Machaca & Leigue (2024) argue that successful CBT depends on local governance and factors such as community ownership, participation, decision-making processes, revenue-sharing arrangements, and positive collaboration with other stakeholders. This approach allows communities to have greater autonomy and independence within a CBT project. In practice, focus on local management is often trumped by participants' actual ability to manage tourism businesses (Mielke, 2012). To address this, Dodds et al. (2018) argue that CBT initiatives should be planned far in advance, promote cooperation, and build trust among stakeholders; this includes community members who are indirectly participating in the project. The community should be provided with the resources, opportunities, vocabulary, knowledge, and skills to increase their capacity to determine their own future and to participate in matters that affect their lives (Hamzah, 2014, López-Guzmán et al., 2011). Mielke (2012) argues for the need to involve communities in monitoring and evaluation of the CBT projects, as this process would necessitate the need for specifying goals. Habiba & Lina (2023) state that when the community is meaningfully in control and involved in a CBT project, success can go beyond economic benefits, promoting a wide range of benefits, including psychological, social, and environmental protection (Dodds et al., 2018).

Further, Hamzah (2014) argues that the willingness to engage in tourism by community members is an important success factor for CBT; as such, they argue that it is important to consider the values of the local community and incorporate this into the project. This includes considering local cultural norms and understandings of what management, participation, collaboration, etc, may involve and the ongoing impact on the community. For example, the success of an ecolodge in Madidi, Bolivia, led to the Bolivian government creating a National Park which in turn placed serious restrictions on other

communities living within this region, as the new National Park status of their land meant they were unable to access their traditional areas for agriculture, hunting, fishing, and the gathering of fruits, palms, and other forest products. This led to further communities turning to CBT as an economic alternative due to diminished access to renewable natural resources (Machaca & Leigue, 2024).

Lastly, the imposition of Western frameworks, such as democratic processes to decision-making within a CBT project, has often proved ineffective, as some cultural groups have shown discomfort with decisions adopted by majoritarian vote (Barbieri et al., 2020), which can clash with local cultures that favour traditional authorities who make crucial decisions (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018, Zielinski et al., 2021). CBT projects have often assumed that communities are homogenous and have shared interests, whereas in reality they comprise of complex relationships of class, gender, and ethnicity in which certain individuals or families possess privileged status. This can create tensions and conflicts, going against the very aim of CBT for community development. The ability of community members to work together and the degree to which a common goal is shared among members greatly affect the potential for success (López-Guzmán et al., 2011).

Ensuring the Financial Viability of CBT Programmes

Financial solvency is also highlighted as a key factor, without which a long-term CBT project cannot exist. López-Guzmán et al. (2011) argue that financial viability is the overarching element that defines success. Mielke (2012) further proposes that market linkages, rules and agreements between stakeholders are critical for long-term success, even arguing that a CBT project should not be undertaken if these are not present, as without these, the project may collapse once funding is withdrawn. Again, this is where assistance or partnership with the private sector may help to close the knowledge and skills gap and increase market exposure, aiding with commercialisation and therefore leading to financial sustainability and long-term success (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006, Dodds et al., 2018, López-Guzmán et al., 2011). As such, integrating communities into global networks may be a critical element in achieving success within a CBT project (Darmana, 2019).

Further, given the complexity, scale and number of stakeholders within the tourism industry, maintaining local control once a project becomes integrated within global systems is often seen to be a losing battle, particularly within low and middle-income countries, where the political economy of tourism is largely driven by powerful external stakeholders, market capitalism and neoliberal interests (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). Conversely, Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018) argue that CBT should not lead to the perpetuation of dependency. This stance posits that assistance should be long-term but temporary, with the project working to become an independent business with no or minimal financial input from outside parties (Dodds et al., 2018). Saayman & Giampiccoli (2016) argue that failure to do so undermines CBT's aim of empowerment for local communities.

Type of Tourism Offered

Finally, it is argued that the type of tourism being offered should be examined. Many CBT projects centre around accommodation; however, accommodation often does not lead to maximum benefits (Afenyo-Agbe & Mensah, 2022). An example of this is in Los Yungas. Initially, this project was a community-owned lodge, opened with the help of an NGO; however, the lodge only attracted 60 visitors per year. The community changed course and built a small walking trail, focusing instead on day trips rather than overnight stays, attracting more visitors. More income was generated from a small entry fee to the walkway and through providing local guides to the tourists (Strydom et al., 2018), achieving much greater success with a smaller investment.

CBT enterprises that focus on activities that can be marketed as day trips and/or part of tour packages to mainstream operators or complementary services to dominant tourism activities in the area hold a lot of potential. Further, it is argued that CBT may be best suited to be a supplemental source of income and should not substitute traditional activities based primarily on agriculture, fishing, and livestock farming (Gabriel-Campos et al., 2021). Malatji & Mtapuri (2012) argue for CBT projects to relate to pre-existing activities, for example, coffee farmers entering coffee tourism. Given the potential volatility of the tourism market, overreliance on CBT could increase a community's vulnerability and dependence on outside assistance (Gantait et al., 2022).

2.6. Summary

This chapter reviews the current literature on CBT in relation to the aims and questions. It outlines what CBT is and its commonly accepted objectives and definitions. The balance between community ownership and external input remains a challenge, as most success factors highlight the need for outside stakeholders, yet excessive outsider control can undermine the core philosophy of CBT (Afenyo-Agbe & Mensah, 2022). Thus, the distribution of power and local participation are key considerations for CBT success.

Part Two: Community Resilience

2.7. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to community resilience (CR) relevant to the questions and aims of this thesis. It begins by describing the origins of community resilience and how it is commonly understood within the literature, highlighting and briefly reviewing the four most commonly mentioned potential indicators of resilience for a community. It then moves on to exploring various conceptions of community and explores the potential impact the tourism industry has on CR. Finally, the last section reviews the use of indicators as a measure of CR, highlighting common uses of indicators in relation to CR and exploring some of the potential limitations of using indicators as a measure of CR.

2.8. What is Community Resilience?

The theory of resilience was proposed by the ecologist Holling in 1973 (Andersson et al., 2018, Basurto-Cedeño & Pennington-Gray, 2016). It was defined as “the ability of ecosystems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and persist” (Holling 1973, as cited in Manner-Baldeon et al., 2024, p.163). Over the past few

decades, the field of resilience has gained increasing attention (Gu et al., 2023) from a wide array of actors, including national organisations, researchers, and policymakers, largely in reaction to escalating global instability caused by both environmental and political factors, such as climate change and the increasing volatility of geopolitics (Basurto-Cedeño & Pennington-Gray, 2016).

Through resilience being adopted by various disciplines, societal dimensions appear to have emerged as a prominent component through which resilience is conceptualised, which has caused intense debate within resilience literature, particularly surrounding nature and society (Andersson et al., 2018, Clark et al., 2024, Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022). The increased focus on social dimensions within resilience has led to the emergence of CR (Wakil et al., 2021). This is a form of resilience that seeks to place focus on a community's ability "to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters while mitigating future impacts" (Yang et al., 2021, P.2). The concept of CR has continued to evolve in the literature since its emergence, including a greater focus on preparation and adaptation within communities for potential adverse future events (Wakil et al., 2021).

A community focus within resilience may also lead to greater scrutiny of wider power structures, such as organisations or the nation-state, as well as micro social dynamics, for example, class or racial groups (Hall & Zautra, 2010). Further, the emphasis on people within a CR framework can provide a useful way to understand human adaptation, which can aid in guiding research, advocacy and intervention (Huerta-Tantalean et al., 2024). This emphasis on people within CR can also place greater control within the community, helping to illuminate transformative, disruptive, subversive and potentially more effective modes of resilience (Rosales Dalgo, 2019, Wright, 2021). From reviewing the literature, the most commonly identified indicators of potential resilience for a community were economic resilience, environmental resilience, social resilience and cultural resilience, each of which is briefly explored below.

Economic Resilience

Economic resilience commonly refers to a community's ability to endure economic shocks. It is generally measured through the extent to which a community has a diverse

economy, strong local businesses, fostering of entrepreneurship, financial resources such as income, and credits at the household and community level that can sustain the resilience goal of the community (Lew, 2014, Wakil et al., 2021). The quality, diversity and type of employment community members have available to them is also considered a measure of economic resilience, as a lack of strength in this area is often correlated with low levels of resilience (Khater & Faik, 2025, Manner-Baldeon et al., 2024).

Environmental Resilience

Environmental resilience is often described as the extent to which a community is able to manage challenges like resource conservation and risk mitigation and recover from natural disasters. Understanding a community's level of environmental resilience is particularly important within communities that take part in nature-based tourism. (Lew, 2014, Manner-Baldeon et al., 2024). Environmental resilience can also be understood as the natural capital of a community, which ranges from intangible goods, such as the atmosphere and biodiversity, to material goods, such as trees, water, and land that are directly used for production (Wakil et al., 2021). Further, environmental resilience can also be understood as the level of infrastructure, construction and resource access within a community (Lew et al., 2016, Wakil et al., 2021).

Social Resilience

Social resilience is impacted by factors such as social cohesion, support networks, social inclusion, and community trust. It largely examines the psychological capital of a community and the extent to which these communities can positively maintain these attributes or overcome challenges like poverty to attain the above-mentioned attributes (Cafer et al., 2022, Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022). Effective governance is raised as a further important consideration for social resilience, which can come from actors outside the community, such as government institutions or from within the community through collective action (Wakil et al., 2021). Critically, effective governance enables a community to adapt to challenges as well as engage more effectively with policy

(Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022, Huerta-Tantalean et al., 2024). Further, focusing on the most vulnerable within a community can help build social resilience, as understanding the causes of their vulnerability, such as inequity, insecurity, unequal distribution of power, limited participation of marginal groups, and poor governance, can help illuminate weak areas or potential barriers to social resilience (Manner-Baldeen et al., 2024, Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011).

Cultural Resilience

Sharifi (2016) describes cultural resilience as the ability of a cultural system to preserve cultural identity and heritage, safeguard cultural assets, and empower local narratives against external pressures. Cultural resilience seems to be identified as an important tool to help communities connect with outside institutions such as public agencies and non-governmental organisations through the promotion and protection of cultural heritage, such as language, cultural practices, and knowledge (Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022, Lew et al., 2016). Cultural resilience can also promote political elements such as the right to self-determination and sovereignty, further driving community resilience (Fabbri et al., 2020, Gocer et al., 2024).

2.9. Community Within Community Resilience

Community is a central element of CR; to explore how a community contributes to resilience or how resilient a community is, an operational definition of community is needed. Community is a term with many definitions, depending on which lens it is viewed from (Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022, Sharifi, 2016). Croes (2014) argues that a working definition of community can be constructed through connecting common threads from definitions that can then be woven together to develop a functional community resilience index. Following this logic, this paper has reviewed several conceptualisations of community in order to understand how community is commonly conceptualised within the literature.

Andersson et al. (2018) state that the term community has contrasting definitions in different social sciences. They highlight that a common thread throughout these definitions is the understanding of community as a type of social system, which is principally defined by its spatiality and proximity between members within the community against the outside. They, however, challenge this idea, arguing that most communities are "too diffuse with blurred boundaries that span regional, national, and continental frontiers with many people often making their livelihoods outside the immediate geographic area" (Andersson et al., 2018, p.124). Further, they argue that communities should not be viewed as cohesive or homogeneous spaces and that common definitions of community that define it from a traditional standpoint may lead to certain socially constructed ideas and images of community influencing how community is understood within policy planning and tourism development (Andersson et al., 2018, Wakil et al., 2021).

Additionally, Lew et al. (2016) argue that a community can be considered a political sub-system existing within a system. They define a community as a sub-system containing many further sub-systems within itself, such as residential systems, educational systems, and transportation and utility systems. Wakil et al. (2021) similarly posit that a community functions as a network for exchanging knowledge and skills. Their understanding of community emphasises interpersonal relationships, socio-economic structures, cultures, and social orders as assets that provide individuals within the community with a certain level of ability to cope with adverse events. Hall & Zautra (2010) further argue that communities should be studied from the residents' perspective, as this is an area that is currently poorly understood, particularly within the tourism literature, where studies have heavily focused on the whole community system (Khater & Faik, 2025, Wakil et al., 2021).

This approach is seen as useful within CR, as understanding how community members define their community and its ability to prepare for and withstand shocks can play a vital role in enhancing a community's resilience, as it reveals perceived preparedness for crises within a community and may highlight potential weak areas (Lachapelle et al., 2020). Conversely, Pilquimán-Vera et al. (2020) argue that communities have not been sufficiently studied in their entirety, arguing instead that there is a need for broader research in this area. They further assert that the knowledge relating to resilience within community systems is largely theoretical, as practical applications of resilience are often

focused on segments of the community, which they argue hinders attempts to understand how structural change can be made.

Four important concepts for considering the community:

- An effective unit of identity and belonging,
 - A functional unit of production
 - Exchange, a network of relations
 - A unit of collective actions.
-

Figure 4: (Important Concepts for Considering the Community, Wakil et al., 2021).

2.10. Community Resilience and the Tourism Industry

Tourism is commonly identified in community resilience literature as a crucial discipline to consider, as it significantly affects key elements forming community resilience, including community capital, the economy, and infrastructure (Yang et al., 2021). Conversely, many tourism scholars are increasingly interested in resilience because of the steep increase in natural disasters and the impact they have on the tourism industry globally (Lew et al., 2016, Manner-Baldeon et al., 2024, Yang & Kim, 2023). Further, many researchers document that tourism has a positive impact on conservation and resilience building, particularly through economic benefits, within communities that practice nature-based tourism or CBT in rural areas (Andersson et al., 2018, Clark et al., 2024, Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). Previous studies have found that in rural settings, tourism-dependent communities are often more resilient than non-tourism-dependent communities, as the economic benefits from tourism allow communities to bounce back from disasters more quickly. Tourism also often brings infrastructural benefits that positively impact the community's resilience (Khater & Faik, 2025, Wakil et al., 2021).

Key Factors that Boost Community Resilience within a Tourist Destination:
• The community involved must be willing to adapt and seek opportunities to transform.
• Maintain excellent social and human capital within the community.
• Foster strong connections with stakeholders outside the community.
• Strengthen leadership skills of local residents.
• Promote economic development through diversification.
• Preserve efficient management of its resources.

Figure 5: Key Factors that Boost Community Resilience within a Tourist Destination, Yang & Kim, 2023, p.540)

However, despite the increased interest in resilience from the tourism field overall, it has largely been slow to adopt resilience frameworks; as such, within tourism development, there seems to be no universally agreed-upon resilience framework (Lew et al., 2016, Clark et al., 2024). Pilquimán-Vera et al. (2020) argue that this has resulted in resilience being arbitrarily adopted within the tourism field, with it mainly focusing on the economic resilience of a community and/or the ability of communities to recover from disasters and crisis preparation (Basurto-Cedeño & Pennington-Gray, 2016, Clark et al., 2024, Yang et al., 2022), while cultural, institutional, or infrastructural forms of resilience are largely overlooked, which can lead to the negative impacts of tourism, such as resource depletion and cultural decline, not being considered when examining resilience within a community (Manner-Baldeon et al., 2024, Yang & Kim, 2023).

As Yang et al. (2022) further highlight, although tourism development often brings economic benefits to communities that positively impact CR, this offers an incomplete

picture of the potential impact of tourism on a community's resilience. For example, a review of the community resilience literature found that environmental pollution and overuse of natural resources are common within tourism-based communities. This calls into question whether the resilience gained through economic benefits is not undone by decreasing resilience in other areas (Yang et al., 2022). As such, it is relevant to explore and consider the complexity of both the positive and negative impacts of tourism and how this may affect the resilience of a community (Thái, 2018, Wakil et al., 2021).

2.11. Measuring Community Resilience

Within the study of CR, there seems to have been a push from researchers and practitioners to develop a framework that can measure CR. While it appears there is still no definitive framework for measuring CR, several potential measures have been suggested within the literature (Cafer et al., 2022, Maclean et al., 2014, Voak et al., 2024). Some examples include exploring residents' perceptions of resilience, applying a human ecology theory to understand how humans interact with their community and the surrounding environment (Clark et al., 2024) and identifying agents of resilience within a community (Andersson et al., 2018, Khater & Faik, 2025). A further suggested measure of CR that many frameworks use is indicators (Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022).

Indicators have been especially popular over the past few decades with policymakers from the international to the national and the local level, as they are often considered legitimate governance technology that can be easily submitted for evaluation, calculation, and intervention (Merkel Arias & Kieffer, 2023). Further, indicators are commonly viewed as a way to quantify community resilience by many researchers and policymakers. As Tan (2021, p.2) highlights, “quantifying community resilience transforms a theoretical, complex concept of community resilience into a tangible, actionable one, and provides a systematic way of thinking through the various components of community”. Commonly identified indicators used in CR assessment tools relate to the social context, economic factors, the natural environment/ecology, infrastructure, available resources and lastly, institutional and governance input (Gu et al., 2023, Tan, 2021). These combined subjects encompass a wide range of factors that may be influencing a

community's resilience. Further, given the broad nature of these subjects, the indicators derived from them are more likely to be able to be applied to wider systems rather than focusing on the individual level, which can provide a framework that avoids confusing the sources and the outcomes of resilience (Musavengane & Kloppers, 2020, Sharifi, 2016, Sherrieb et al. 2010).

Some limitations of using indicators to measure resilience include overly simplistic models that collapse the highly contextual, complex and multi-dimensional concept of resilience into a formulaic process in which data is flattened into quantified scores, ranks, and indices (Tan, 2021). Potential further issues with indicators are the risk of researchers predefining expected outcomes, deriving indicators primarily based on data availability, indicators made through top-down, expert-driven processes, and indicators being developed by researchers rather than the community (Cafer et al., 2022). This can result in data that is too narrow in focus or overlooks potential resilience indicators, and may also lead to an assumption of a normative state of resilience (Lew et al., 2016). Further, many community resilience assessment tools, such as indicators, only take a static snapshot of a community's resilience, meaning they do not capture the temporally dynamic nature of resilience (Yang et al., 2021). If the dynamics within a community are not sufficiently considered, indicators may effectively mask the inequality and hierarchy inherent within these spatial units (Kamarudin et al., 2020).

Conversely, indicators that are developed with a bottom-up approach can challenge the commonly held assumption that resilience building, as it is currently composed, is effective and positive for the community. Which can risk overlooking important considerations such as power structures, social divisions and inequalities within a community, which raises the question of resilience for whom (Fabbricatti et al., 2020, Gonzales-Iwanciw et al., 2022, Kamarudin et al., 2020). An example of a bottom-up approach to indicators is found in Huerta-Tantalean et al. (2024) case study, which aims to analyse the key indicators developed by two ecotourism community associations in Peru to enhance community resilience during the COVID pandemic. The analysis, which relied on interviews with locals, revealed that the most influential indicators of community resilience were a strong sense of community, active participation, and robust social support.

2.12. Summary

This chapter has explored the concept of community resilience. Resilience is a theory that has gained increased attention over the past few decades, largely in response to the increasing vulnerability of the natural world and political sphere. Community resilience is a concept that has grown out of resilience theory and seeks to centre the community as a force for building resilience, which opens space for a more human, specific and contextualised approach to resilience (Basurto-Cedeño & Pennington-Gray, 2016, Cochrane, 2010). For the purpose of this research community resilience has been considered in the context of tourism where the literature has shown that it is largely studied in relation to disaster recovery rather than considering the ongoing resilience of a community that is influenced by wider power structures, environmental conditions (both the natural environment and man-made infrastructure, etc.), and cultural systems (belief systems, internal power structures). Indicators are one way researchers and practitioners have sought to measure resilience within a community; however, there has been a tendency for indicators to be developed in a top-down fashion, which can overlook nuances and cultural contexts within a community. The next chapter will review the methodology, methods, and analysis approach used for this research.

3. Chapter Four: Methodology, Methods, and Data Sources

3.1. Introduction

Methodology and methods bridge the theoretical, conceptual base of a research design to practical means, such as data collection (Murray & Overton, 2014). As this research adopts a qualitative approach, the accompanying methodology and methods are based on ontologies that seek to observe, interpret and describe (O’Leary, 2021). This research aims to explore how CBT projects can influence community resilience. A qualitative methodology is applied to this research, using inductive thematic analysis of the data. This chapter will outline the methodology, methods used to collect data, ethical considerations, data analysis techniques and finally, the limitations of this study.

3.2. A Qualitative Methodology

The philosophy that underpins the qualitative approach is largely in contrast to the positivist epistemological approach found within the quantitative tradition (Murray & Overton, 2014). The qualitative approach grew out of “a recognition of the need for alternative ways to produce knowledge” (O’Leary, 2021, p.150), offering a means to understand and explore social complexities such as belief systems, lived experiences, social structures and interactions within social groups. As such, a qualitative approach seeks to understand the social world and human experience in context, meaning research often occurs in natural settings (Stewart-Withers et al., 2014). The main focus of this research is to understand and explore local experiences, social patterns, and wider climatic and ecological events and how they impact the strength and success of CBT projects, lending itself to a qualitative approach. Further, this research falls within the historical-hermeneutic side of research, as it is trying to interpret the processes and patterns which are used by a community to successfully navigate a CBT project, rather than predict the outcomes or demonstrate a measurable objective truth (Murray & Overton, 2014).

3.3. Methods

This research seeks to explore whether CBT projects can promote resilience within a community. For this research, two methods were utilised: document analysis of grey literature and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with five people who worked either with or for a CBT project, while the document analysis of grey literature was based primarily on government policies and documents.

Document Analysis of Grey Literature

Grey literature includes both published and unpublished materials, which can include conference papers, newspapers, government documents, etc (O’Leary, 2021). Unlike peer-reviewed literature that has gone through an evaluation process, grey literature is typically not subject to a systematic review process (Wright et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it can help extend the scope of findings and highlight novel avenues of enquiry (Adams et al., 2017). This research draws on a document analysis of grey literature, primarily sourced from the Bolivian government's publicly released policies on CBT and development plans, such as Plan Nacional de Turismo 2015-2020 (PLANTUR) (The National Tourism Plan 2015-2020) and the Plan Sectorial de Desarrollo Integral Para Vivir Bien 2021–2025 (Sectoral Plan for Integral Development to Live Well 2021-2025), which outlines the government’s plan to foster development within Bolivia through tourism. Several conference papers documenting CBT projects within Bolivia that have been facilitated by the private sector were also analysed.

Further, as Morgan (2022) states, “one of the crucial components of conducting a document analysis is selecting the appropriate documents to analyse” (p.75). As stated above, most of the data used in the document analysis was drawn from government policy documents. These sources were valuable for understanding the broader direction of Bolivia’s tourism industry and helped support and contextualise data gathered from interviews. The documents covered a period of approximately two decades, enabling some degree of comparative analysis. The initial aim was to determine the number of documents used by seeking a point of redundancy when new data no longer provides new

insights (Tisdell et al., 2025). However, the limited availability of relevant documents became the greater factor in determining the number of documents used.

A list of the examined documents is included below:

Summary of Documents Used for Document Analysis of Grey Literature

Document	Summary
Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo Turístico 2012-2016 (Strategic Plan for Tourism Development)	This policy document seeks to establish tourism as a strategic economic activity that must be developed sustainably, and that the State must promote and protect community-based tourism to ensure it benefits urban and rural communities, including Indigenous and peasant peoples.
Ley General de Turismo “Bolivia te espera” (2012) (General Tourism Law “Bolivia Awaits You”)	This government document from the Bolivian Government details the 2012 law that promotes, projects and incentivises tourism activity within Bolivia.
Plan Nacional de Turismo 2015-2020 - Agenda Turística PLANTUR 2025 (National Tourism Plan 2015-2020)	This document builds on tourism development policies introduced under the Morales government, marking a shift that placed Indigenous cultures at the centre of Bolivia’s tourism strategy; although short-lived, this agenda has significantly shaped subsequent government tourism policies.

Plan Sectorial de Desarrollo Integral Para Vivir Bien 2021–2025 (Sectoral Plan for Integral Development to Live Well 2021–2025).	This government document outlines plans to revitalise and strengthen the tourism sector, including community-based tourism through coordinated action and sustainable development to support national economic recovery and the 2021–2025 development agenda.
Community-based tourism initiatives that contribute to the SDGs in Bolivia: Integral Family Community Tourism TICOF and Entrepreneurship Ecological Hostel Chalalan	This is a document that was presented at the 2023 International Conference on Sustainable Development. It details the contribution of CBT to the SDGS in Bolivia, focusing specifically on Chalalan.
Prime Case Study - BOLIVIA (PRIME - Pioneering Real-time Impact Monitoring and Evaluation in small and medium enterprises).	This case study, conducted by PUM (Netherlands senior experts) and CBI (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries), seeks to assess the business conditions for small-scale enterprises within Bolivia.
Programa de Turismo Rural Comunitario: Una nueva metodología para incrementar el empleo productivo y el trabajo decente en Bolivia (Community-based Rural Tourism Programme: A new methodology to boost productive employment and decent work in Bolivia)	This document gives an overview of CBT training programmes in Bolivia run by the International Labour Organisation.
Red Boliviana de Turismo Solidario Comunitario (Bolivian Network of Community-Based Solidarity Tourism).	This document explains the work of the Bolivian Network of Solidarity and Community Tourism (Red TUSOCO), which supports different rural community tourism initiatives in Bolivia This report investigates whether tourism can become an engine for sustainable development within Bolivia, highlighting

(Figure 6: Summary of Documents Analysed, Source: author)

For this research, the document analysis focused on addressing question one, which examined the long-term success factors of CBT projects in Bolivia. Documents were selected based on their relevance to the five CBT success factors identified in the literature, which were:

Factor 1. Training and Skill Building of Local Stakeholders' Knowledge of the Tourism Industry.

Factor 2. Partnership with External Agents and Collaboration Amongst Stakeholders.

Factor 3. Integration of Community Values, promoting Local Governance and Participation.

Factor 4. Ensuring the Financial Viability of CBT Programmes.

Factor 5. Type of Tourism Offered.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Liamputtong and Rice (2020) state that interviews are a useful method for qualitative research since they help to “reconstruct events the researchers have never experienced” (p.189), allowing the researcher to gain an insider perspective. This research undertakes semi-structured interviews with five individuals involved in CBT projects, including both those directly engaged in the projects and those collaborating from external organisations. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by open-ended questions that facilitate a more natural flow of conversation. A benefit of this approach to interviewing is that it can allow the researcher to obtain the necessary information while allowing space for unexpected data to emerge (Busetto et al., 2020, O’Leary, 2021), while also providing the researcher with a pre-prepared interview protocol, so that the interview can be refocused if the interviewee veers off topic (Kircher & Zipp, 2022).

The initial plan was for interviews to take place at a location of the interviewee's choice, with participants approached without prior contact; however, only one interview was conducted in person. One factor contributing to the low response rate for interview participation may be Bolivia’s decolonisation movement, which has sought to decentre Western ideologies and ways of knowing (Ranta, 2016). This aligns with findings from

Datta (2018), which showed that many Indigenous communities felt that research conducted by Western universities “did not have any positive impact on their community”.

During the in-person interview, the participant provided contact details for additional potential interviewees, all of whom were located in the Amazon region. As a result, the remaining interviews were held online via Zoom. The first interview was set up by the owner of a hotel, who, after declining to participate themselves, suggested someone they thought would be interested who was currently in the same area.

Before each Zoom interview, the interviewees were sent the interview questions, consent form, and a short explanation of the research aims by email. A translator was also present for all five interviews. Interviews took around an hour, with five minutes at the start to explain the research focus, go over the consent form, and handle any other admin. Interview questions were constructed around focus points to investigate the long-term success of the CBT project. These were drawn from this project's aims and questions, which have been influenced by the five success factors identified in the literature review, which were outlined above in the document analysis section.

Further, the four potential indicators of community resilience (1. economic resilience, 2. environmental resilience, 3. social resilience and 4. cultural resilience) that were identified in the literature review also influenced interview questions; in some cases, questions were formed by drawing from both success factors and indicators of resilience. For example, “Does this CBT project collaborate with external agents (tour guides, members of the community not involved in the project, local government, etc)?” (Factor 2) “Do you feel this has influenced levels of trust and social cohesion within the community?” (Indicator 3). The interviews had six guiding questions; however, the discussion was largely unstructured, allowing participants to direct the conversation to what they thought were the most important elements, highlighting their lived experiences (O’Leary, 2021). Lastly, a selective transcript was sent to each interviewee. Interviewees were invited to edit, correct or expand upon the text. The interviewees were informed that they had two weeks to respond, after which time it would be assumed that they agreed with the transcript. Interviewees were also informed of this during the interviews. Only two interviewees responded to these emails, neither of whom wished to make any changes.

Summary of Interview Participants

Interviewee	Summary
Interviewee One	Worked for an NGO supporting and helping communities develop CBT projects across Bolivia.
Interviewee Two	Owned a CBT-run hotel and served on a local board developing additional CBT initiatives.
Interviewee Three	Local community member involved with Chalalan and collaborating with several CBT projects in the region.
Interviewee Four	Local guide working for CBT projects in the Amazon region.
Interviewee Five	Worked for an NGO supporting CBT projects throughout Bolivia.

Figure 7: Summary of Interviewees (Source: author)

3.4. Ethics

Ethics is a critical element of any research project, particularly those involving human participants or fieldwork that takes place within low- and middle-income countries, which is the case in this research. There is the potential for a range of ethical issues to emerge, including power imbalances between the researcher and participants and the possibility of cross-cultural misunderstandings (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014, O’Leary, 2021). Further, there are important ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent from any research participants, ensuring confidentiality, and handling data. As such, the ethical

implications of undertaking fieldwork must be integrated into every stage of research. To ensure this is done, Massey's international development department has an in-house ethics process for all research projects, followed by an application for approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Code. This research has been through both processes and was deemed to be low risk.

For this research, contact with research participants was established first by travelling to destinations with CBT tourism, staying in CBT-run hotels, and requesting an interview with the hotel owners or managers. As stated above, only one interview was conducted through this process; this was also the only interview that was conducted in person. The rest of the interviews were over Zoom. Further interviews were set up by asking each interviewee if they knew anyone else who might be interested in taking part at the end of the interview. Several people who were contacted for an interview did not reply or agreed to an interview but then did not show up. In order to uphold ethical standards, these people were not contacted again so as not to make them feel pressured into giving an interview.

Further, to adequately address the ethical considerations of this research project, the Massey Code of Ethical Conduct (Code of Ethical Conduct, 2017) was used to guide ethical considerations within this research, which is explored below.

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, all data was stored on my password-protected computer and was only accessed by me. Further, interviewees were given an information sheet detailing how information gained through interviews will be used and how they will be identified within the research, which is through a number.

Informed Consent/ Avoidance of Harm

It is important to have informed consent from all interviewees. To ensure this, an information sheet was sent out prior to the interview, informing participants of the purpose and focus of the interview. It included the aims of the research, interview

questions, how long the interviews would take and steps that have been taken to minimise potential harm to participants. Interviewees were also asked to consent to having interviews recorded and were informed of their ability to withdraw from participation in the research.

Positionality

This term is reflective of the post-modern position that pushes back on the idea that a researcher is an objective, neutral observer. Instead, it sees the researcher as a fully involved participant whose relationship to their participants must also be considered (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014), as the researcher is not a neutral or detached actor within the data collection process (Cassell et al., 2017). The researchers' personal context should then be reflected upon. While conducting research and analysis of data, potential biases as a white, educated, Westerner from a high-income country must be constantly considered. This also includes being reflective while analysing data and considering how my views and feelings may influence how findings are interpreted (Morgan, 2022).

3.5. Data analysis

This research takes an inductive thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes, providing “systematic procedures for generating codes and themes from qualitative data” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p.297). The initial data analysis was conducted through reading the grey literature and interview transcripts while keeping the five CBT success factors and four indicators of potential resilience in mind, highlighting relevant information. Through this process, several of the grey literature documents were discarded. This provided the first way in which the data was organised. Data was then coded for keywords such as “business plan” and “tax”; these topics were then grouped by themes, for example, financial issues. After organising the data into themes, the themes were grouped again. For example, one group was comprised of the themes “financial issues”, “outside organisations” and “state

input”. From here, themes were integrated; for example, local values and local participation became one theme.

I used the chart in Figure 8 as a guide throughout the data analysis process:

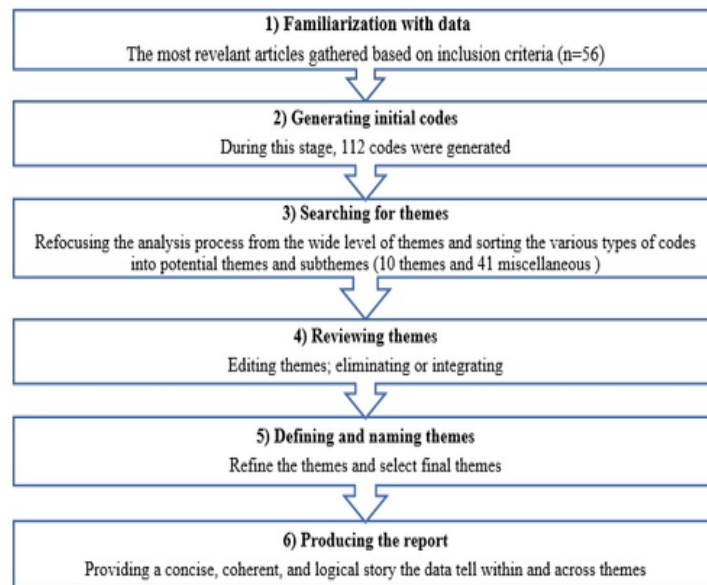


Figure 8: Thematic analysis 6 steps (Improving the Theoretical Understanding Toward Patient-Driven Health Care Innovation Through Online Value Co-Creation: Systematic Review, 2020, p.5)

The data analysis uses CR as a conceptual framework. CR as a conceptual framework facilitates the exploration of the complex internal and external factors, such as community dynamics and external input, that influence a community's ability to participate in and maintain influence within a CBT project. Participation and power distribution emerge as important concepts within both CBT and CR (Maclean et al., 2014). Clark et al. (2024) argue that CBT may have the ability to increase the adaptive capabilities of local communities through participation and power distribution. CR can provide a lens through which to explore the nuances of how participation and power distribution have increased the adaptive capabilities of a community, potentially pointing to indicators of increased community resilience that can also be posited as potential factors for success within CBT.

3.6. Limitations

The small scale of this research presents an important limitation. Ideally, data saturation would guide the number of interviews; however, due to time constraints and challenges in accessing participants, only five interviews were conducted. Queirós et al. (2017) highlight that adequate sample size is often an issue in qualitative research. To address this, the research focus and aims should be well structured. Further, the research process should be transparent to clearly show the small scope and limited range of knowledge that the research aims to cover (Oppong, 2013). Consequently, the findings and discussion take a tentative approach, avoiding definitive conclusions. Despite the limited scope, the study generated valuable insights.

Another limitation is that three out of the five interviews focused on the Amazon region, restricting the scope. Interviews also present reliability and validity challenges, as language is ambiguous and meanings vary (Queirós et al., 2017, Ochieng, 2009). The researcher-interviewee cultural differences and translation from Spanish to English may have led to loss or altered meaning. However, including representatives from Indigenous communities and organisations working within these communities provided some diversity of perspectives.

3.7. Summary

This chapter outlined the qualitative methodology adopted to examine the relationship between community-based tourism and community resilience. It detailed the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews to explore both institutional and community-level perspectives. The chapter also explained how inductive thematic analysis, informed by a community resilience framework, was used to identify key factors influencing CBT success and resilience outcomes, while acknowledging the ethical considerations and methodological limitations that frame the research's scope and findings.

4. Chapter Five: Research Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will present the findings that have been collected through document analysis of grey literature and semi-structured interviews. As outlined earlier, this research seeks to explore the impact of Community-Based tourism projects on local communities in Bolivia using the lens of Community Resilience. This chapter will synthesise research findings to answer the questions: (1) What factors contribute to or hinder the long-term success of the examined Community-Based Tourism projects? And (2) To what degree has the use of CBT projects resulted in more resilient communities? This chapter first discusses the positive factors and barriers to long-term success by identifying the key themes that arose in the interviews and the document analysis. It then presents findings related to community resilience, organised according to four identified indicators of resilience. Finally, this chapter ends with a summary.

4.2. Factors that Contribute to Long-Term Success

Authenticity as a Competitive Advantage

There was agreement that one of Bolivia's strengths as a tourist destination was its perceived authenticity. The development of new tourist activities, whether CBT or private commercial enterprises, was often framed around authenticity and integrating local culture into tourist activities: "Tiene que ser auténtico" (Interviewee Two, August 2025)². Authenticity was largely understood as presenting local culture, values and ways of life, such as reviving traditional local crafts and weaving techniques to sell to tourists.

It also appeared that Bolivia's authenticity, both from a cultural and ecological standpoint, was viewed as something that set it aside from other locations offering a similar product.

² It has to be authentic.

“Tenemos un destino que es único” (Interviewee Two, August 2025)³. Integrating local culture into CBT projects was highlighted as an important element for long-term success, as it was seen to strengthen local cultures while providing a unique and marketable edge that aligned with tourists' demands. In the words of one interviewee:

En nuestro caso, la diferencia es que este ecosistema frágil sigue estando menos perturbado que, digamos, el Amazonas que se puede ver en Brasil, Perú o Ecuador. Allí, las actividades de gran impacto, especialmente la agroindustria, la minería y la infraestructura a gran escala, ya han dañado esas áreas. Pero en Bolivia, todavía tenemos la oportunidad de ver estos ecosistemas, la vida silvestre y la biodiversidad de una manera más auténtica (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁴.

Interview Five also mirrored this opinion, stating:

Lo que hacen en Perú y Colombia es un poco más teatral; es decir, es algo más... montado. Aquí, en cambio, es natural: las personas que trabajan aquí, que viven aquí, se van a presentar tal como son. No vamos a disfrazarlo, no va a ser teatro. Va a ser algo real. (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁵.

Further, four of the nine documents reviewed for this research mentioned authenticity in relation to Bolivia's tourism branding. This has been a marketing tactic adopted by the Bolivian government over the past few decades. As demonstrated in the Bolivian government's 2012 to 2016 national tourism plan, which states that it sought to:

Fomentar y promover una oferta integral, sustentable, diversificada e innovadora del “Destino Bolivia”, basada en principios de respeto a la Madre Tierra, las culturas y tradiciones de los pueblos a fin de posicionar

³ We have a destination that is unique.

⁴ In our case, the difference is that this fragile ecosystem is still less disturbed than, let's say, the Amazon you can see in Brazil, Peru, or Ecuador. Over there, the large impactful activities, especially agribusiness, mining, and major infrastructure, have already damaged those areas. But in Bolivia, we still have the opportunity to see these ecosystems, the wildlife, the biodiversity, in a more authentic way.

⁵ What they do in Peru and Colombia it's a little more theatrical, I mean, it's something more... staged. Here, it's natural, the people who work here, who live here, they're going to present themselves as they are, we're not going to disguise it, it's not going to be theatre. It's going to be something real.

al Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia como una opción auténtica, diversa y competitiva a nivel internacional y para el turismo interno (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, Ministerio de Culturas, 2011, P.45)⁶.

Authenticity as a national brand was further supported by the government through making the promotion of local culture in tourism an official policy in 2012 with the passing of the General Tourism Law “Bolivia te espera” (Bolivia Awaits You). One of the aims of this law was to make “Bolivia te espera” a brand that signified authentic products:

“Bolivia te espera”, sello que garantizará la autenticidad y la calidad de la artesanía, a través del reconocimiento de la habilidad y destreza de los artesanos y artesanías locales (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2012, p.38)⁷.

The promotion of authenticity appears to have had some impact, as surveys done by the PRIME case study monitoring tourism in Bolivia found that Bolivia is perceived to be the most authentic country in South America by travellers (Ton & van Rijn, 2017). Finally, the five reviewed government policy documents identified CBT as a key instrument for establishing authenticity as a national brand, given that this form of tourism aligns with the government's broader goals of “mejorar la calidad de vida de las comunidades” (Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 2011, p.65)⁸. based on the principles of Buen Vivir.

Training

According to interviewees One, Three, and Five, training is a central element in long-term success for CBT projects. Chalalan, a CBT-run ecolodge located in Madidi National Park, was repeatedly raised in the interviews as an example of a successful CBT project. It is one of the first and longest-running CBT businesses in Bolivia. It has also inspired

⁶ To foster and promote a comprehensive, sustainable, diversified and innovative offering of “Destination Bolivia”, based on principles of respect for Mother Earth, the cultures and traditions of the peoples in order to position the Plurinational State of Bolivia as an authentic, diverse and competitive option internationally and for domestic tourism.

⁷ “Bolivia awaits you”, is also a seal that guarantees the authenticity and quality of the handicrafts, through the recognition of the skill and dexterity of local artisans.

⁸ Improving the quality of life of the communities.

the creation of other CBT projects, which follow Chalalan's model as one interviewee noted:

Gracias al ejemplo de Chalalan se han creado seis empresas más (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁹.

Extensive training was highlighted as an important part of Chalalan's ongoing success: "El proceso de formación es extenso e incluye una amplia gama de temas desde biología hasta idiomas" (Interviewee One, August 2025)¹⁰. As another interviewee pointed out:

Los guías han aprendido a hablar un idioma extranjero. Este grupo indígena es el que tiene el mayor porcentaje de jóvenes que hablan inglés, de modo que pueden transmitir a los visitantes el conocimiento local de la selva o de su cultura (Interviewee Three, August 2025)¹¹.

A similar sentiment was shared by another interviewee:

Toma tiempo, pero al menos en el emprendimiento Chalalán han logrado un buen resultado, porque han formado a los primeros guías naturalistas indígenas (Interviewee Four, August 2025)¹².

As the above quotes demonstrate, providing opportunities for Indigenous communities to share their culture with tourists is a central part of Chalalan's training process, "porque es clave dentro de este tipo de turismo" (Interviewee Three, August 2025)¹³. While interviewee Five felt that taking part in Chalalan:

Proporcionó a la población local un sentido de orgullo por su cultura y fortaleció la participación (Interviewee Five, October 2025)¹⁴.

As well as providing a source of income that allowed more people to remain within their communities.

⁹ Thanks to the example of Chalalan, six more enterprises have been created.

¹⁰ The training process is extensive and includes a wide range of topics from biology to languages.

¹¹ The guides have learned to speak a foreign language. This Indigenous group is the one with the highest percentage of young people who speak English, so that they can transmit local knowledge of the forest or of their culture to visitors.

¹² It takes time, but at least in the Chalalan venture, they have achieved a good result, because they have trained the first indigenous naturalist guides.

¹³ Because it is key within this type of tourism.

¹⁴ Provided local people with a sense of pride in their culture and strengthened participation.

Beyond Chalalan, document analysis showed that organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation in Bolivia (ILO) and Red TUSOCO Bolivia, also focused on training as a means of achieving success within CBT projects. For example, the ILO Bolivia has recently developed a “training of trainers” programme that seeks to support CBT projects and help local communities use available resources to develop and sustain CBT projects:

El objetivo del proceso de Formación de Formadores ha sido fortalecer las capacidades a nivel nacional para utilizar el paquete de formación de la OIT. Ahora, el grupo de participantes podrá implementar el Programa en sus regiones y aprovechar el turismo rural comunitario como un motor para el desarrollo sostenible y para la creación de empleo decente (Organización Internacional Del Trabajo, 2025, p.9)¹⁵.

However, there was acknowledgement in both the interviews and from the International Labour Organisation in Bolivia that there were areas in which training was lacking throughout CBT projects in Bolivia, particularly in administration, which will be explored later in this chapter. Further, references to training were limited throughout the four government documents reviewed: three of the documents only mentioned training once, while the most recent document included three mentions of training, perhaps showing an increased focus on this area. However, in all five documents, descriptions of training were brief, often limited to a bullet point such as “Recibir formación en turismo”(Ley General de Turismo, 2012, p.1100)¹⁶.

Assistance from NGOs and the Private Sector

Assistance from NGOs and private companies arose as a further important factor in the long-term success of CBT projects, as one interviewee stated:

¹⁵ The objective of the Training of Trainers process has been to build capacity at the national level to use the ILO’s training package. Now, the group of participants will be able to implement the Programme in their regions and to leverage community-based rural tourism as an engine for sustainable development and for the creation of decent employment.

¹⁶ Receive training in tourism.

Las iniciativas en territorios indígenas, ya sea de ecoturismo comunitario u otros emprendimientos comunitarios, rara vez tienen éxito sin alianzas (Interviewee Three, August 2025)¹⁷.

These findings are supported by the Technical Report by Fundación Educativa exploring tourism development in Bolivia, which found that although Bolivia had a strong potential for economic growth using CBT:

The nature of these enterprises requires a hybrid model that combines philanthropic funds with support from private companies (Andersen et al., 2024, p.17).

Chalalan was again used as a successful example of effectively utilising partnerships, such as implementing an incentive strategy with tourism companies, where higher-than-average commissions were offered for selling their tourism packages, which yielded positive results.

Si el promedio de las empresas ofrecía una comisión del 10 %, Chalalán ofrecía una comisión del 20 % para que dieran prioridad a la venta de sus paquetes. Eso tuvo resultados favorables con las empresas privadas (Interviewee Four, September 2025)¹⁸.

Testing products with tourism experts before a product was launched was another way that outside support was used to develop CBT projects, as one interviewee explained:

Hemos invitado a los operadores turísticos a conocer el producto antes de colaborar con nosotros (Interviewee Two, August 2025)¹⁹.

Furthermore, private companies were identified by interviewee Three as valuable partners for their market access, meaning they could promote CBT projects at international fairs or present them to partners outside Bolivia, allowing the project to reach a wider audience.

Four of five interviewees also mentioned that NGOs played a very important role in supporting CBT projects; several NGOs that “[nos] apoya[n] de manera permanente”

¹⁷ Initiatives in indigenous territories, whether community-based ecotourism or other community enterprises, rarely succeed without partnerships.

¹⁸ If the average of the companies offered 10 per cent commission, Charalán offered 20 per cent commission so that they would give priority to selling their packages. That had favourable results with private companies.

¹⁹ We've brought tourism operators to see the product before working with us.

(Interview Four, September 2025)²⁰. were mentioned throughout the interviews. Interviewee Two highlighted that support was mainly through access to resources, such as training programmes, economic funds, and building materials, which allowed projects to recover after disruptive events such as COVID-19. The importance of support by NGOs was echoed by interviewee Three, who highlighted that they provided opportunities for community members to take part in international conferences that enabled community members to share their experiences. They stated:

Ayudan a las personas a viajar al extranjero para mostrar sus iniciativas o compartir sus experiencias. Por ejemplo, en mi experiencia, muchos de mis viajes fuera de Bolivia para hablar sobre experiencias de ecoturismo fueron financiados por ONGs (Interviewee Three, August 2025)²¹.

Such trips were regarded as valuable opportunities for further promoting CBT projects to a broader international audience, as well as aligning local CBT initiatives with recognised best practices. However, interviewees One, Three, and Five felt that there was a risk of over-reliance on support from outside organisations, leading to dependency, as interviewee Three stated:

No es raro que los proyectos fracasen cuando termina el apoyo financiero (Interviewee Three, August 2025)²².

It was also noted that many communities did not implement the business plans they had developed with NGOs, as there was an assumption that the NGOs would “rescatarlos” (Interviewee Five, October 2025)²³. if difficulties arose. Interviewee One felt that this stemmed from the community having “muchas necesidades. ¿Cómo van a ahorrar dinero? Es complicado” (Interviewee One, August 2025)²⁴.

²⁰ Permanently support us.

²¹ They help people travel abroad to showcase their initiatives or share their experiences. For example, in my experience, many of my trips outside Bolivia to discuss ecotourism experiences were funded by NGOs.

²² It is not uncommon for projects to fail when financial support ends.

²³ Rescue them.

²⁴ Many needs. How are they going to save money? It's complicated.

4.3. Factors hindering long-term success

Limited Administrative, Marketing, and Technological Skills

A lack of marketing and administrative skills was frequently identified in the interviews as an area where training was lacking and posed a risk to the future of CBT projects. Interviewees One and Three raised concerns that training focused almost exclusively on guides and operational issues, while training in administration was insufficient, as one interviewee explained:

Ahora bien, ¿son suficientes esos entrenamientos? Incluso hemos realizado capacitaciones en temas administrativos, formación sólida en administración, más capacitación en manejo de redes, marketing, muchas cosas. Ahora bien, ¿es eso suficiente? Mi sensación es que no (Interviewee One, August 2025)²⁵.

Another interviewee reinforced this quote, noting:

Muchos se han limitado a guiar y asesorar en la parte operativa. Es decir, cuando se crean estos proyectos, se centran en la infraestructura, la implementación y el equipamiento hasta cierto punto, pero hacen muy poco en la parte administrativa. Y eso, según veo, conlleva un alto riesgo de fracaso (Interview Three, August 2025)²⁶.

A comparative analysis of successive national tourism plans shows that the Bolivian government has long recognised this gap. For example, PLANTUR included plans to develop technical skills within CBT projects through a technical assistance program that sought to teach administration, accounting, finance, and self-management. This program, however, was never launched. The latest tourism report builds on these earlier intentions, stating that the 2008 CONOCE-BOLIVIA tourism law has been updated as of 2021, which:

²⁵ Now, are those trainings sufficient? We've even done training in administrative issues, strong training in administration, more training in handling networks, marketing, lots of things. Now, is that enough? My feeling is no.

²⁶ Many have limited themselves to guiding and advising in the operational part. That is, when these projects are created, they focus on infrastructure, implementation, and equipping to some extent, but they do very little in the administrative part. And that, I see, carries a high risk of failure.

Está destinado a incentivar el turismo, promoverlo mediante paquetes turísticos, marketing, capacitación, asistencia técnica e inversión para el desarrollo turístico (Ministerio De Desarrollo Productivo, 2023, p.17)²⁷.

Further, non-governmental organisations, such as The Red TUSOCO, also sought to:

provide technical assistance and training services to help develop their organisations, manage their tourism initiatives and the quality of their services, with particular attention to aspects such as self-management (*Red Boliviana de Turismo Solidario Comunitario*, 2020).

However, interviewees One, Two and Three viewed effective training as a complicated issue to address, as marketing and administrative matters are activities that require a lot of logistical elements that local communities are often not “están culturalmente acostumbrados a desarrollar” (Interviewee One, August 2025)²⁸. An example provided by interviewee One was marketing; they were concerned that local communities were not applying market training effectively, as the marketing that was currently being done was indiscriminate and lacked focus, “porque no han identificado sus nichos de mercado específicos” (Interviewee One, August 2025)²⁹., which was believed to risk too many CBT projects offering the same thing.

Tax Burdens

Interviewees One, Four and Five emphasised that tax-related challenges were a recurring issue, which put many CBT projects at significant risk of failure, “porque al final cualquier error con los impuestos significa multas astronómicas” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)³⁰. There was an agreement that it was common for CBT projects that achieved some success to distribute the earnings throughout the community without considering tax implications.

²⁷ Is intended to incentivise tourism, promote tourism with tourist packages, marketing, training, technical assistance, and investment for tourism development.

²⁸ Culturally used to developing.

²⁹ Because they haven't identified their specific market niches.

³⁰ Because in the end any mistake with taxes means astronomical fines.

Esto ha generado muchos conflictos; es una carga terrible la que están llevando, con deudas que ascienden a millones (Interviewee Four, September 2025)³¹.

Again, this issue was attributed to a lack of administrative training in many CBT projects, leading to weak systems that put the entire project at risk.

Interviewee Four suggested that more state support was needed, as although community tourist ventures are recognised and protected by the state:

No cuentan con una regulación fiscal específica, lo que significa que están sujetos a las estructuras empresariales convencionales (Interviewee Two, August 2025)³².

This was creating a high-risk situation when an entire community is involved in a CBT project, where legally, “son una corporación con acciones” (Interview Four, September 2025)³³. This meant failure may lead to the community's assets being seized. As interviewee Five explained, in the past this situation has led to:

Un tiempo de deterioro, reflexión y desilusión para ellos, como miembros de la comunidad, porque después de haber tenido esta empresa, de repente está en riesgo de perderse (Interview Five, October 2025)³⁴.

As such, tax issues were also highlighted as posing a risk to the cohesion of the community.

Lack of Government Support

Lack of support from the government was repeatedly raised in the interviews as a barrier to success, which negatively impacted CBT projects; as one interviewee noted:

³¹ This has generated a lot of conflicts; it's a terrible burden that they are carrying, with debts in the millions.

³² Do not have specific tax regulation, meaning they are subject to conventional business structures

³³ They are a corporation with shares.

³⁴ A time of deterioration, reflection, disappointment, for them as community members, because after having this enterprise, suddenly it's at risk of being lost.

Bolivia es un país caracterizado por un potencial turístico muy fuerte, lamentablemente descuidado por el Estado (Interview Five, October 2025)³⁵.

Further, it was highlighted that most of the support that they do receive is from private companies, NGOs or foundations:

Aquí trabajamos más o menos solos, con algo de cooperación internacional; no contamos con apoyo del Estado en ningún nivel (Interviewee Two, August 2025)³⁶.

According to interviewees Five and Two, the lack of government support has led to a lack of assistance through loans or protective laws, as well as limited infrastructure development, which makes tourist sites difficult to access, particularly in the Amazon region. Further, lack of state support in helping to market CBT projects was raised as a particular barrier: “Deberían involucrarse más en las estrategias de promoción y marketing” (Interview Three, August 2025)³⁷. Interviewees Two and Four also felt that the state had the ability to do more to showcase tourism in Bolivia at a foreign and national level that would benefit CBT projects.

This sentiment was also reflected in the document analysis with the Prime report reviewing small and medium tourism enterprises in Bolivia, reporting that at the government level, CBT is often not taken seriously:

In general, Bolivia has a high rotation of governmental staff, and it is not uncommon for staff to be replaced by unskilled or inexperienced employees (Ton & van Rijn, 2017, p.8).

Similarly, the ITO found that in Bolivia, there appears to be little regulation of tourism activities at the national level, with no system for coordination among tourist development sites by regions (*Organización Internacional Del Trabajo*, 2025).

³⁵ Bolivia is a country characterised by very strong tourism potential, unfortunately neglected by the State.

³⁶ Here we sort of work alone, with some international cooperation, we don't have support from the State at any level.

³⁷ They should be more involved in promotion and marketing strategies.

4.4. The Degree to which the Use of CBT Projects Resulted in More Resilient Communities

This section draws on the four indicators of potential resilience for a community as identified in the literature review. Unlike the definition of indicators that is explored in the literature review, this study is using conceptual indicators (economic, social, cultural, and environmental resilience) to guide analysis, not to measure quantitatively, as this would be beyond the scope of this research.

Economic Resilience

Interviewees Two and Three highlighted that CBT projects could play a vital role in building economic stability within a community, which could also have a positive impact on other areas, as highlighted by one interviewee:

Pueden llevar economía a sus hogares, y salud y educación a sus hijos
(Interviewee Two, August 2025)³⁸.

One area in particular that was emphasised was that money earned from CBT projects had enabled some Indigenous communities to have their territorial rights recognised. Chalalan is one such example, as noted by one interviewee:

La gente local lo financió por sí misma. Los recursos generados por el emprendimiento Chalalán permitieron que el Estado otorgara ese reconocimiento. Creo que contar con el reconocimiento de tus derechos territoriales te permite llevar a cabo otras iniciativas y emprendimientos
(Interviewee Three, August 2025)³⁹.

There was a shared perception among interviewees Two and Three that land ownership was important for the well-being of a community involved in CBT, as it allowed the

³⁸ They can bring an economy to their homes, bring health and education to their children.

³⁹ The local people financed it themselves. The resources generated by the Chalalan enterprise allowed the State to fulfil that recognition. I believe that having the recognition of your territorial rights allows you to carry out other initiatives and enterprises.

community to have greater control over the impact the project had. Interviewee Two gave an example of a community where they highlighted that:

La actividad turística no ha influido en la forma de vida porque está lejos
(Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁴⁰.

It was highlighted that because they had territorial rights to their land, they were able to choose to put the CBT project in their territory, but not their community. Interviewee Two further felt that, along with CBT, communities should be involved with other initiatives and enterprises to generate several sources of income:

Porque el turismo en Bolivia no es suficiente para que todos puedan vivir de él
(Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁴¹.

However, despite the benefits generated by tourism income, it was also highlighted by interviewee Four that the introduction of money to the community could change traditional ways of life and weaken community ties as people start prioritising money:

Anteriormente, en una comunidad indígena, las personas eran mucho más colaborativas; ayudaban no por dinero, sino de manera voluntaria, cooperativa, en reciprocidad. Cuando entra el dinero en juego, eso cambia (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁴².

It was highlighted that this can cause conflicts within the community, especially in relation to the transparency and handling of money. Interviewee Three further pointed out that another area that has caused conflict is with community members who start working with the CBT project; they stated that it was not uncommon for them to:

Dejan atrás algunas de sus prácticas tradicionales, como las actividades agrícolas, la caza, la pesca o la recolección de frutos, porque ahora deben cumplir con horarios de trabajo (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁴³.

This shift was seen as creating conflicts within the community as these community members no longer took part in daily life.

⁴⁰ Tourism activity hasn't influenced the way of life because it's far away.

⁴¹ Because tourism in Bolivia isn't enough for everyone to live off of it.

⁴² Previously, in an indigenous community, people were much more collaborative; they would help not for money but voluntarily, cooperatively, in reciprocity. When money comes into the picture, that changes.

⁴³ Leave behind some of their traditional practices, like agricultural activities, hunting, fishing, or gathering fruits, because now they must work scheduled hours.

Social Resilience

The establishment of CBT projects was highlighted for its positive impact on social inclusion and social support within communities by interviewees Three and Four. For example, one community was developing a new walking route with local women to “rendir homenaje y mostrar el papel de las mujeres en la agroforestería” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁴⁴. Further, it was pointed out that through tourism, more people in the community were getting a higher education in fields related to tourism and returning to the community to help with projects; according to one interviewee:

Ahora, muchos jóvenes, varones y mujeres, tienen títulos académicos. Por ejemplo, en mi caso, completé una Maestría, lo cual sirve como ejemplo para que otros jóvenes se preparen, estudien y adquieran mayores conocimientos técnicos y científicos (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁴⁵.

Interviewee Five also felt that the increase in academic opportunities had led to a “despertando el liderazgo, tanto en hombres como en mujeres” (Interviewee Five, August 2025)⁴⁶, from indigenous communities, as these communities were recognised through CBT at the regional, national, and international level.

However, it was also highlighted by interviewee Two that currently, many communities only have primary schools:

Lo que significa que cuando un joven llega a la secundaria, debe emigrar” (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁴⁷.

It was not uncommon for these people not to return to the community, as it was seen as lacking opportunities. Conversely, interviewee Five stated that some children would drop out of school to remain in the community.

The impact of tourists was raised as a factor that may impact social cohesion within a community. There was some disagreement as to the current state of tourism, with

⁴⁴ Pay homage and show the role of women in agroforestry.

⁴⁵ Now, many young men and women have academic degrees. For example, in my case, I completed a Master’s degree, which serves as an example for other young people to prepare, study, and acquire greater technical and scientific knowledge.

⁴⁶ Awakening leadership, both in men and women.

⁴⁷ Which means that when a young person reaches secondary school, they must emigrate.

interviewee One feeling that they were receiving negative tourism, particularly from younger tourists: “Lo que les importa es la aventura, fumar marihuana, y nada más.” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁴⁸. Interviewee Five agreed with this assessment, highlighting that “algunos turistas ignorarían las solicitudes de no consumir alcohol” (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁴⁹. It was felt that this type of activity could generate negative cultural impacts.

However, other interviewees felt that tourists' behaviour was improving, particularly from what it had been in the past. Where tourism had centred around hunting and fishing, they stated that now most tourists “vienen con la intención de contribuir a la conservación” (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁵⁰. or “queriendo tener una experiencia cultural auténtica” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁵¹. This was highlighted as an important part of responsible tourism, where both local communities and tourists uphold “ciertos principios o valores” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁵². This was presented as a means of ensuring that CBT would be a mutually beneficial experience.

Cultural Resilience

There was a general agreement among all interviewees that CBT projects had fostered a sense of pride in being indigenous within local communities. Interviewee One felt that, through interacting with tourists, local communities had a greater sense of pride in their culture; as one interviewee noted:

Les hace sentirse iguales, con mucho menos miedo de presentarse como indígenas (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁵³.

Interviewee Three also mirrored this opinion, stating:

⁴⁸ What matters to them is adventure, smoking marijuana, and that's it.

⁴⁹ Some tourists would ignore requests not to drink alcohol.

⁵⁰ Come with the intention of contributing to conservation.

⁵¹ Wanting to have a real cultural experience.

⁵² Certain principles or values.

⁵³ It makes them feel equal, with much less fear of presenting themselves as indigenous.

La gente se sentía orgullosa de venir de una comunidad indígena y de un territorio indígena (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁵⁴.

Both interviewees felt there had been a wider revaluing of cultural identity within communities as a result of being involved in CBT projects.

It was further highlighted by interviewee Two that they felt CBT had revitalised local culture; they gave the example of the establishment of a linguistic institute to preserve the local language. This was also associated with a stronger sense of pride, as was highlighted by interviewee Two:

Antes, la gente sentía vergüenza de hablar lenguas indígenas porque eran discriminados; ahora, eso les hace sentirse orgullosos (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁵⁵.

They believed this could create a virtuous cycle, as increased pride and connection to one's culture, along with the economic boost from tourism, might result in fewer people leaving their communities.

Despite the feeling that CBT had led to a greater sense of pride among the community, it was also pointed out by interviewees Four and Five, that in some CBT projects, “el aspecto cultural no está suficientemente valorado” (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁵⁶. It was highlighted that it was not uncommon for guides to:

Dar solo los nombres científicos de animales o árboles, pero no los nombres indígenas (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁵⁷.

Interviewee Four also raised concern of the potential adverse impact of the economic disparity between tourists and locals. This was noted as being particularly impactful on younger members of the community, as tourists often from the US or Europe arrive “con súper celulares, súper equipo de campamento, súper todo” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁵⁸, while many CBT projects take place in communities with limited internet, no school, no electricity or running water.

⁵⁴ People felt proud to come from an Indigenous community, and from Indigenous territory.

⁵⁵ Before, people were ashamed to speak Indigenous languages because they were discriminated against, now it makes them feel proud.

⁵⁶ The cultural aspect isn't sufficiently valued.

⁵⁷ Only give scientific names of animals or trees, but not Indigenous names.

⁵⁸ With super cell phones, super camping gear, super everything.

Similarly, Interviewee One also felt that this disparity, along with the general influence that Western culture has globally, was a factor in young people turning away from their culture: “en lugar de seguir aprendiendo su lengua, prefieren aprender inglés” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁵⁹. This was also raised as an issue among guides, as it was highlighted that, as guides have more contact with guests and have learned a foreign language, it has led some to “sienten que tienen ciertas ventajas o superioridad sobre otros en la comunidad” (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁶⁰. This was reinforced by material items left behind by tourists, such as branded clothing not available in Bolivia, which guides would wear.

Environmental Resilience

Interviewees One, Two and Five linked CBT projects with increased environmental resilience within communities. They agreed that if a CBT project was successful, it often had a positive impact on the environment because locals were more invested in protecting the environment, as it is part of their livelihood, as expressed by one interviewee:

Sienten que esta actividad es un medio de vida importante para ellos, y que las actividades insostenibles la ponen en riesgo (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁶¹.

Interviewee two stated that some communities in the Amazon region were less likely to engage in monocrops, which often involved cutting down areas of the rainforest “al haber podido generar ingresos a partir de los proyectos de TCB” (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁶². There was also a feeling that, through reconnecting with their culture through CBT, some communities also retook traditional roles as custodians of the environment:

Ha ayudado a que las personas comprendan que su papel es el de custodios, guardianes y defensores de estos espacios. No es casualidad que en Bolivia las

⁵⁹ Instead of continuing to learn their language, they prefer to learn English.

⁶⁰ Feel they have certain advantages or superiority over others in the community.

⁶¹ They feel that this activity is an important livelihood for them, and unsustainable activities put it at risk.

⁶² As they were able to generate income from CBT projects.

áreas habitadas por pueblos indígenas sean donde se concentra la mayor riqueza biológica (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁶³.

Further, it was highlighted that tourism could be a useful way to promote conservation to tourists. This was seen as particularly important in the Amazon region, as noted by one interviewee:

Los turistas van a conocer realmente cómo es la vida en el Amazonas, porque es fácil predicar la conservación, pero es otra cosa ver cómo es realmente por dentro (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁶⁴.

However, despite the positive elements for environmental resilience, the threat from mining companies was repeatedly raised as a major risk factor to the overall resilience of communities in the Amazon region.

Se están llevando a cabo actividades de minería ilegal en el Parque Nacional Madidi, generando contaminación del agua, deforestación y alterando el ecosistema de la fauna (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁶⁵.

Water contamination in particular was raised as a critical issue, as many communities live on the riverbed, with the river providing a large amount of their food. This issue was being further exacerbated by climate change, as one interviewee stated, the river's:

Caudal ha disminuido tanto que no es navegable en algunas épocas del año (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁶⁶.

The findings from the document analysis closely aligned with the interviewees' accounts, as the International Conference on Sustainable Development 2023 report highlighted that local communities “have become the only guardians of nature in the region” (Coarite & Garcia, 2023, p.6), as the public sector does not effectively control the threat of illegal mining.

⁶³ It has helped people understand that their role is as custodian, as guardian, as defender of these spaces. It is no coincidence that in Bolivia, the areas inhabited by Indigenous peoples are where the greatest biological richness is concentrated.

⁶⁴ Tourists are going to really know what life is like in the Amazon because it's easy to preach conservation, but it's another thing to see what it's like inside.

⁶⁵ Illegal mining activities are being carried out in Madidi National Park, generating water pollution, deforestation and altering the ecosystem of the fauna.

⁶⁶ Flow has dropped so much that it's not navigable in some parts of the year.

4.5. Summary

This chapter presented the research findings from the document analysis and semi-structured interviews, examining the factors shaping the long-term success of CBT projects in Bolivia and their contribution to community resilience. The findings indicate that authenticity, training, and partnerships with NGOs and private-sector actors are central to CBT success, while limited administrative capacity, tax burdens, and insufficient state support act as significant constraints. Using economic, social, cultural, and environmental resilience as potential indicators of CR, the chapter demonstrates that CBT may enhance community resilience through income generation, strengthened cultural identity, social inclusion, and environmental stewardship, while also revealing tensions related to inequality, dependency, governance gaps, and external pressures that complicate resilience outcomes.

The following chapter discusses how these findings position CBT projects in Bolivia regarding success and resilience, situating them within the broader literature on the subject.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This research report aimed to investigate the factors that influence the long-term success of CBT projects. This has been explored through factors that hinder and aid CBT projects. A CR lens is used throughout this report, and guides the second research question, which examines the degree to which CBT has resulted in greater CR within communities. This chapter begins by analysing question one from the interviews, which were structured around the five CBT success factors and four resilience indicators outlined in the literature review. The semi structured approach to interviews allowed interviewees to raise issues they considered most relevant, resulting in the emergence of several themes that highlighted both success factors and limitations of CBT which were: Authenticity as a Competitive Advantage, Training, Assistance from NGOs and the Private Sector, and a series of limitations such as Limited Government Support, Tax Burdens, and Gaps in Administrative, Marketing and Technological Skills.

For the discussion, these themes have been consolidated into three broader categories: Authenticity as a National Brand, Structural and Policy Barriers to CBT Sustainability in Bolivia, and The Role of Assistance and Training in Sustaining CBT Projects. This allows for a clearer examination of how the identified success factors and limitations interact, and to reduce overlap across subject matters. This chapter then addresses question two through the themes of Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Resilience. In addition, it considers the wider structural and institutional context as an important indicator of CR in Bolivia. Finally, it discusses future research opportunities and presents its conclusion.

5.2. Question One: What Factors Contribute to or Hinder the Long-term Success of the Examined Community-Based Tourism Projects?

Authenticity as a National Brand

This section explores how the concept of authenticity has influenced the sustainability of CBT in Bolivia. The findings suggest that authenticity functions as both a cultural asset and a valuable branding tool. While CBT literature often warns that authenticity can be externally imposed, the Bolivian case suggests local communities largely negotiate it.

As indicated by interviewees' responses, authenticity was viewed as an asset for Bolivia's tourism industry. Several interviewees believed that Bolivia retains “una manera más auténtica” (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁶⁷. of presenting its culture, distinguishing it from other similar destinations, which were perceived as “más teatral” (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁶⁸. Authenticity was therefore viewed as a key asset on which Bolivia could build its national brand and attract visitors. Furthermore, the document analysis showed that the Bolivian government also promoted authenticity through national tourism campaigns, the passage of laws aimed at ensuring the protection and promotion of indigenous cultures through tourism (Plan Sectorial, 2023), and government policies, such as El PLANTUR, which sought to promote Bolivia as a “destino autentico”⁶⁹. This report further highlighted that it aimed to utilise “la cultura local como medio de generación de ingresos a través del turismo” (Plan Estrategico, 2012, p.20)⁷⁰. This suggests that the state's framing of authenticity positioned it not just as a cultural value but as an economic strategy. Through the institutionalisation of authenticity in national laws, CBT is positioned to promote both cultural identity and poverty reduction.

These findings align with the literature, which states that CBT often uses authenticity as a major selling point (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2020). However, the issue of power is also raised within the literature, as Cornelisse (2020) argues, it must be considered how authenticity is defined and who gets to decide this. Notably, one interviewee from an NGO expressed frustration with local communities not showcasing their culture to tourists, instead using “nombres científicos” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁷¹., despite their efforts to encourage them to centre their CBT project around their culture.

⁶⁷ A more authentic way.

⁶⁸ More theatrical.

⁶⁹ Authentic destination.

⁷⁰ Local culture as a means of generating income through tourism.

⁷¹ Scientific names.

This suggests that the power to decide how their culture was presented lay with the local community. This was further supported by the document analysis; the reviewed policy documents did not prescribe what “culture” should entail when engaging in tourism: instead, they emphasised the “carácter plurinacional de Bolivia” (Estado Plurinacional, 2011, P.3)⁷², encouraging communities “proteger, preservar, conservar y mejorar el patrimonio cultural de las comunidades indígenas” (Plan Estratégico, 2012, p.5)⁷³. This finding is significant because it challenges the critique in CBT literature that authenticity is often externally imposed. It appears that in the Bolivian context, authenticity is likely to be negotiated locally rather than imposed by outside actors.

Structural and Policy Barriers to CBT Sustainability in Bolivia

This section examines how state support, taxation, and political instability have influenced the sustainability of CBT in Bolivia. The findings indicate that limited government backing and a mismatch between taxation policies and community needs pose significant challenges; although Bolivia has CBT-related legislation, political instability and inconsistent implementation weaken the state's capacity to provide an enabling environment for long-term success.

According to several interviewees, CBT projects in Bolivia were often “descuidado por el Estado” (Interview Five, October 2025)⁷⁴, receiving limited support in promotion and marketing strategies, while also being subject to conventional business structures. A commonly mentioned example was taxation, which had resulted in “multas astronómicas” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁷⁵, and caused “muchos conflictos” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁷⁶ within communities. Interviewees suggested that such issues could potentially undermine the long-term success of CBT projects. The current taxation framework seems to reflect a structural disconnect between the needs of small-scale community enterprises and the national economic policy. The literature similarly identifies financial viability as a core determinant of CBT success (López-

⁷² Plurinational nature of Bolivia.

⁷³ To protect, preserve, conserve, and enhance the cultural heritage of indigenous communities.

⁷⁴ Neglected by the State.

⁷⁵ Astronomical fines.

⁷⁶ A lot of conflict.

Guzmán et al., 2011), reinforcing the view that the absence of specialised taxation policies in Bolivia for CBT projects may weaken their long-term sustainability.

Choi & Sirakaya (2006) argue that CBT projects are often hindered by the lack of specific policies and legal regulations, as the state often does not have these measures in place, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). However, this is not the case in Bolivia, as the document analysis revealed that the state does have specific laws and policies to promote CBT; however, political instability appears to undermine them. For example, in 2019, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism was dissolved by the de facto government following contested electoral results. As a result, five years of tourism management reports were lost, leaving no reliable database on advancements made in national tourism development for this period (Plan Sectorial, 2023).

Moreover, “implementación inconsistente de políticas turísticas”⁷⁷. appeared to be an issue leading to an ongoing lack of sectoral resilience (Plan Sectorial, 2023, p.15). Most notable is the case of PLANTUR, which was enacted in 2015, and later abandoned and replaced with Plan Sectorial de Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien del Sector Turístico (Sectoral Plan for Comprehensive Development to Live Well in the Tourism Sector) at the end of 2017. Although the new policy largely followed the same goals as its predecessor, inconsistent implementation meant the previous policy guidelines were still being followed in some parts of the country without legal backing. As the International Labour Organisation (2025) highlights, within Bolivia, there appears to be little regulation of tourism activities at the national level, and no systems for coordination among tourist development sites by regions, hindering the monitoring of CBT projects' success. This indicates that wider structural issues are stopping CBT projects from receiving more support. These findings suggest that the long-term success of CBT projects is vulnerable to state instability and the capacity of the state to provide an enabling environment for tourism.

The Role of Assistance and Training in Sustaining CBT Projects

⁷⁷ Inconsistent implementation of tourism policies.

This section examines how external support and training influence the sustainability of CBT in Bolivia. The findings indicate that while support from NGOs and private actors can strengthen technical capacity and market access, training remains narrowly focused, and marketing and administration skills are often overlooked. Further, reliance on external assistance raises concerns about long-term dependency, highlighting ongoing tensions between the need for support and the goal of fostering genuine community autonomy.

Outside assistance and training also emerged as important influences on the long-term sustainability of CBT projects in Bolivia. Several interviewees felt that effective training not only enhances skill development but also facilitates increased participation and ownership of CBT projects. However, within examined projects, training appears to largely be concentrated on building skills related to guiding, such as teaching guides “*inglés y biología*” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁷⁸, while training in marketing and administration skills remained underdeveloped. This limited focus suggests that training may be narrowly defined within many CBT projects, potentially leaving important areas largely overlooked.

Training and external support were also identified in the literature review as key elements of CBT success. As Jasrotia & Gangotia (2020) note, training in hospitality, marketing, business management and administration has been shown to significantly improve the likelihood of long-term success in CBT projects. Further, a network-based approach to CBT is identified as a key factor for project success and is widely used throughout South America (Ton & van Rijn, 2017). A network approach refers to an approach to CBT that emphasises interconnections between communities, NGOs and the private sector. Mielke (2012) suggests this approach may be effective because many communities that partake in CBT are excluded from the formal economy and/or lack the skills, resources, and networks necessary to effectively participate in the tourism industry. As such, partnerships with NGOs and the private sector can provide vital support in facilitating access to funding, building technical capacity and connecting projects to the broader tourism market (Barbieri et al., 2020, Habiba & Lina, 2023).

This approach was highlighted in the document analysis and appears to have been successful in the Bolivian context; Andersen et al. (2024) found that CBT within Bolivian

⁷⁸ English and biology

projects demonstrating greater longevity and profitability typically relied on collaboration with NGOs and the private sector. Chalalan provides an example, they partnered with a local tourism company, which “tuvo resultados favorables” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁷⁹, as they were able to reach wider markets, demonstrating that external linkages can enhance financial stability through connecting remote communities to established tourism networks.

A limitation that was identified was the risk of dependency, which was raised both in the literature and the interviews. Interviewees Two and Five felt that CBT projects in Bolivia had created dependency with many communities receiving “apoyo permanente” (Interview Four, September 2025)⁸⁰. from NGOs. Interviewee Five, who worked for an NGO, noted that communities knew they would “rescatarlos” (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁸¹. and, as a result, did not implement the business plans they had developed with them; here, dependency was linked to the “muchas necesidades” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁸². communities face. However, Chalalan was highlighted as an exception to this situation, as this project originated from local initiatives and then sought external support, but maintained control over the tourism project. This may suggest that when the community develops projects, external support may foster autonomy rather than dependency.

It was also noted in the literature that it was common for CBT projects that depend heavily on external funding or NGO involvement to struggle to remain financially viable once support ends (Dodds et al., 2018). This speaks to an ongoing debate within the literature, which is the nature and level of participation and ownership that local communities should have within CBT. The literature consistently identifies genuine community participation as a defining feature of CBT success, highlighting important features such as communities owning, managing and directing tourism activities (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022, Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). However, it is also argued that full independence may not always be realistic, particularly for marginalised communities facing structural poverty and limited infrastructure (Ruiz et al., 2008, Lee & Jan, 2019). There is some suggestion from the findings that this may be the case in Bolivia, as many CBT projects

⁷⁹ Had favourable results.

⁸⁰ Permanent support.

⁸¹ Rescue them.

⁸² Many needs.

in Bolivia have permanent support from NGOs, suggesting that input from outside stakeholders is often required.

5.3. Question Two: To What Degree has the Use of CBT Projects Resulted in More Resilient Communities?

Strengthening Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Resilience through CBT Participation

For this research, CR has been defined as the capacity of a community to adapt, recover, and thrive amid social, economic, and environmental changes (Yang et al., 2021, Pilquimán-Vera et al., 2020). In addition to serving as the theoretical framework that has provided the lens through which this report was constructed, this section connects the positive contributions of CBT to increased CR. From the research, four main areas in which CR could be observed emerged. This section examines economic, social, cultural and environmental resilience, which are examined first by positive impacts on resilience and secondly by the challenges faced. Structural and institutional resilience have been added as a new section, as both emerged as important resilience indicators in the interviews and the document analysis.

Economic Resilience

This section explores how economic resilience in CBT depends not only on income generation but on diversified livelihoods and strong community governance. It appears that economic resilience in the Bolivian context emerges from CBT being integrated into a broader, community-controlled economic strategy rather than functioning as a standalone source of income.

Within the literature, economic resilience is conceptualised as a community's capacity to withstand economic shocks, often linked to economic diversity, which provides

communities with alternative livelihoods and improved living conditions (Wakil et al., 2021). In the broader Latin American context, income diversification is recognised as a vital source of resilience for communities involved in CBT. Case studies from Ecuador and Peru found that communities combining tourism with other economic activities, such as agriculture, are more resilient because they can adapt more effectively to economic crises like COVID-19. Additionally, greater pluriactivity has been found to enhance resilience both for the community and the sustainability of the tourism product (Fernández-Bedoya et al., 2025, Pilquimán-Vera et al., 2020, Gascón & Mamani, 2022). Findings from Bolivia further support this, as interviewees consistently highlighted CBT projects as a way for households and communities to increase their financial stability, since any single source of income was viewed as “no es suficiente para que todos puedan vivir de él” (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁸³. It was also emphasised that, beyond increased income from CBT, some communities used the revenue generated to gain ownership of their ancestral lands, thereby strengthening long-term resource control and improving their ability to shape the development of CBT within their communities.

However, while engaging in CBT had positive economic impacts, the findings also revealed that introducing money into the community could reshape community relationships. Although in the literature economic resilience is often associated with increased household stability (Lew, 2014), several interviewees highlighted that these gains have at times disrupted traditional systems of reciprocity and collaboration. The shift from subsistence-based practices to wage labour appeared to introduce new social dynamics, as they “dejan atrás algunas de sus prácticas tradicionales” (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁸⁴, potentially creating social divisions.

This reflects a broader dynamic identified in the literature: when communities transition toward monetised economies, traditional forms of solidarity and mutual aid may weaken unless supported by strong governance and transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011, Manner-Baldeen et al., 2024). This may suggest that the community element is being overlooked, as was highlighted in the literature review; communities are often considered as a homogeneous group that is expected to share common goals (Mtapuri et al., 2022), which overlooks the many internal issues that the community may be facing. These findings suggest that while CBT can act as an important

⁸³ Not enough for everyone to live off.

⁸⁴ Leave behind their traditional practices

source of income, other factors, such as community ownership of local land and diversity of income streams, may be vital in achieving CR. In the Bolivian context, then, the indicator of resilience seems to stem not just from increased income through CBT but the capacity to use CBT as one component within a broader community-controlled economic strategy. Economic resilience should be considered as interconnected with social and cultural factors, as CBT cannot just rely on examining economic growth but must also consider the community's ability to manage community resources and finances, social networks and community levels of trust.

Social Resilience

This section examines how CBT contributes to social resilience, showing that strengthened education, recognition of women's contributions to the community, and emerging local leadership can enhance community cohesion and governance. However, social resilience is challenged by tourist-related pressures and youth migration, underscoring that resilience is an ongoing process shaped by broader social and cultural dynamics.

As Cafer et al. (2022) and Gonzales-Iwanciw et al. (2022) highlight, social resilience largely examines the psychological capital of a community and the extent to which a community can maintain positive attributes in the face of outside stressors. The findings of this study reflect several of the social resilience indicators identified in the literature, such as social inclusion and community trust. Effective governance is also raised as a further important consideration for social resilience, which can come from actors outside the community, such as government institutions, or from within the community through collective action (Wakil et al., 2021). This appears to be the case in Bolivia, as it was highlighted in the interviews that there has been increased higher education for community members, as well as increased recognition of women within communities. This was associated with a situation of “despertando el liderazgo, tanto en hombres como en mujeres” (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁸⁵, within communities involved in CBT,

⁸⁵ Awakening leadership, both in men and women.

representing a growth in social capital and an increase in resilience as members of the community step into roles of governance.

Outside stressors that potentially negatively impacted the community included a range of tourist impacts. It was highlighted in the interviews that tourism could have negative impacts on communities, ranging from tourists using drugs and alcohol to the wealth disparity between tourists and community members. Interviewees believed that the wealth disparity could lead younger members of the community to turn away from their culture, preferring to “aprender inglés” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁸⁶. rather than Indigenous languages. An issue that was further exacerbated by limited access to secondary education, meaning younger members of the community “debe[n] emigrar” (Interviewee Two, August 2025)⁸⁷.

Further, some guides were perceived as adopting a sense of superiority over other community members, contributing to internal conflicts. These issues highlight that social resilience is not static but an ongoing process that is closely connected to other forms of resilience, such as cultural resilience. Manner-Baldeon et al. (2024) argue that focusing on the most vulnerable within a community can help build social resilience; perhaps greater integration of younger members of the community into CBT projects could offset some of the observed negative impacts. However, this would not account for the lack of educational opportunities, again highlighting the complex nature of exploring CR. In Bolivia, maintaining positive social resilience through CBT may depend on equitable inclusion, increasing educational opportunities and the ability to manage interactions with tourists constructively.

Cultural Resilience

This section explores how CBT can strengthen cultural resilience by fostering pride, identity, and the revitalisation of Indigenous knowledge, while also highlighting challenges where cultural elements are undervalued or overshadowed by other priorities.

⁸⁶ Learn English.

⁸⁷ Must emigrate.

Cultural resilience is the capacity of a community to maintain and adapt its cultural identity, knowledge and practices in the face of external pressures. This emerged as an important indicator within the interviews, as it was reported that there had been a revaluation of local culture through tourism that strengthened identity and pride, as community members took part in a tourism activity that promoted their culture. As Interviewee One noted, interacting with tourists “Les hace sentirse iguales, con mucho menos miedo de presentarse como indígenas” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁸⁸. Another interviewee similarly reported that “La gente se sentía orgullosa de venir de una comunidad indígena y de un territorio indígena” (Interviewee Three, August 2025)⁸⁹. These findings are in line with the wider observations within the literature that CBT can have positive impacts on cultural resilience.

Further, cultural pride can have other impacts on community members, as they may be more likely to remain within their community and invest in local projects. Such initiatives, like a language institute, show how CBT can provide both social and economic means to recover and revitalise Indigenous languages. This can positively add to long-term cultural resilience, where identity and self-determination are sustained over time (Fabbricatti et al., 2020, Gocer et al., 2024).

However, despite interviewees feeling that community members felt increased pride through their involvement in tourism, it was also highlighted by several interviewees that it was not uncommon for communities involved in CBT initiatives not to value the “aspecto cultural” (Interviewee Five, October 2025)⁹⁰, and as a result, would not incorporate it into their tourism projects. This was interesting as it was also highlighted that authenticity was a major part of Bolivia’s tourism offers; however, it appears in practice, there may be a preference for a more scientific and environmentally focused presentation within CBT. Further, the findings highlighted that communities would often distribute earnings without considering tax obligations, leading to “multas astronómicas” (Interviewee Four, September 2025)⁹¹. This underscores the need for protective measures and support when communities become involved in the tourism industry, as standard business practices may not align with local cultural norms. These findings suggest that

⁸⁸ Makes them feel equal, with much less fear of presenting themselves as Indigenous.

⁸⁹ People felt proud to come from an Indigenous community.

⁹⁰ Cultural aspect.

⁹¹ Astronomical fines.

cultural resilience should be understood as a dynamic process. When examining the degree of cultural resilience, the goal should not be to find fixed outcomes but to look at the interconnected nature of resilience, along with social and economic resilience. For example, pride and participation can strengthen resilience, while economic hardship and outside influences can harm social cohesion.

Environmental Resilience

This section shows how CBT can strengthen environmental resilience by aligning environmental protection with community livelihoods, but also highlights that structural threats, most notably illegal mining and weak state support, continue to undermine long-term sustainability.

Environmental resilience can be understood as the extent to which a community can manage challenges like resource conservation, risk mitigation, and recover from natural disasters, as well as a community's natural capital (Wakil et al., 2021). Environmental resilience emerged as a recurring resilience indicator within the interviews; it was viewed as being closely linked to cultural and economic factors. Interviewees believed that successful CBT projects enhanced environmental protection, both through renewed commitment to environmental stewardship and by providing the means and incentive to protect natural resources. As one interviewee observed, “Sienten que esta actividad es un medio de vida importante para ellos, y que las actividades insostenibles la ponen en riesgo” (Interviewee One, August 2025)⁹². In this sense, CBT functions as a way for environmental care to become economically sound and culturally reaffirming. As Habiba and Lina (2023) state, when the community is meaningfully involved in a CBT project, success can go beyond economic benefits, promoting a wide range of benefits, including psychological, social, and environmental protection. Suggesting an increase in environmental resilience can positively contribute to overall CR.

However, despite these positive impacts, it appears that structural threats continue to undermine environmental resilience. The main threat identified in the interviews was from illegal mining in the Amazon region. This was raised by several interviewees as a

⁹² They feel that this activity is an important livelihood for them, and unsustainable activities put it at risk.

major risk to ecosystems and community wellbeing. The document analysis also revealed that inadequate state intervention has left many communities in the region as de facto “guardians of nature” (Coarite & Garcia, 2023, p.8). This highlights the vulnerability of CBT projects if they are not supported by the state. Further, this suggests that in Bolivia, while CBT can strengthen local ability to protect the environment, long-term sustainability may often require systemic support and effective governance. Although structural limitations were most highlighted in relation to environmental resilience, structural limitations were an issue raised with all four resilience indicators explored in this report. This issue will be explored further below.

The Role of Institutional and Structural Contexts in Shaping CBT Outcomes

The interviews and document analysis highlighted the wider structural and institutional context as an important indicator of resilience. Although these issues were not directly included in the interview questions, participants frequently raised them as factors that influence both the overall success of CBT projects and the other resilience indicators discussed. Similarly, the document analysis confirmed that structural and institutional conditions play a significant role in shaping CBT outcomes and in understanding community resilience more broadly.

Structural and institutional indicators emerged as a weak area of resilience amongst the Bolivian CBT projects examined. It appeared that many communities are heavily dependent on support from NGOs and other external organisations, particularly regarding technical assistance, funding and marketing. Further, limited infrastructure, taxation burdens, and inconsistent policy support, as noted earlier in Question One, also seem to be issues that constrain the extent to which CBT benefits can translate into sustainable long-term resilience for a community, seemingly indicating fragile systemic resilience in these areas. As Wilson (2012) argues, lasting community resilience relies on robust institutional networks and supportive governance systems, indicators which seem to remain underdeveloped in the Bolivian CBT context, leaving CBT projects reliant on NGO and private sector support rather than embedded within a coherent national tourism or development strategy.

By identifying and analysing resilience through four interrelated categories: social, cultural, economic, and environmental, this research has attempted to offer a more holistic and context-sensitive understanding of how CBT contributes to community resilience. When exploring the degree of resilience achieved through CBT, it became clear that it is important to distinguish between short-term or quickly achieved resilience (such as increased income and skill development) and long-term resilience (such as community autonomy and stable institutional frameworks). As Berkes and Ross (2013) emphasise, not all forms of adaptation are inherently sustainable or equitable. This is not to suggest that short-term resilience is not important, but for sustainable CR, these more long-term indicators may be vital given the volatile nature of the tourism industry. The findings suggest that Bolivian CBT communities are often within what could be called a partial resilience stage, as they are strongest in social and cultural areas but weaker in structural and environmental resilience. The Bolivian case illustrates how CBT can enhance community participation; however, structural weaknesses and environmental threats continue to limit greater resilience.

Overview of Community Resilience Indicators:

Resilience Indicators	Positive Indicators	Ongoing Vulnerabilities
Economic	Diversified Income, Financial autonomy	Unequal benefit distribution
Social	Leadership, Participation, Empowerment	Tourist impact, Dependency
Cultural	Pride, Preservation of traditions	Cultural change, External influence
Environmental	Awareness, Local initiatives	Mining, Climate change
Structural and Institutional	NGO networks, Training	Infrastructure, Policy gaps

Figure 9: **Overview of Community Resilience Indicators** (Source: author)

Overall, these findings align with the theoretical understanding of resilience identified in the literature review, which frames community resilience as a dynamic and ongoing process of adaptation, rather than a static condition (Gabriel-Campos et al., 2021,

Manner-Baldeon et al., 2024). The Bolivian experience highlights the importance of context, capacity, and external pressures in shaping resilience outcomes. Although CBT contributed to economic diversification, greater local governance and strengthened cultural identity, these gains were often uneven and potentially constrained by dependence on external support. CBT appears to foster resilience to a moderate degree, primarily where communities maintain control over resources and integrate tourism within broader economic diversification. This suggests that comprehensive community resilience depends not only on CBT participation but on the capacity of communities to balance external influences with internal cohesion, cultural continuity, and local autonomy.

5.4. Future Research Possibilities

In the context of this research, the factors contributing to the long-term success of CBT projects and the degree of CR achieved through CBT have been explored. However, a longitudinal study examining how CBT projects evolve under changing political, economic, and environmental conditions would be interesting; given Bolivia's ongoing political instability, the factors that influence CBT success are likely to be subject to change. For example, the recent election of a new government promoting “capitalism for everyone” after decades of the country having socialist rule may reshape tourism policy. Furthermore, comparative research with countries such as Ecuador and Peru, where CBT is also a key tourism development strategy, could be useful. Such research could offer valuable insight into how differing governance structures and institutional support influence the long-term success and resilience of CBT projects.

Overall, this study has demonstrated that the long-term success of CBT and the enhancement of community resilience are multifaceted. No single factor will determine outcomes; rather, it is the interaction of social, institutional, economic, cultural, environmental, and structural indicators that collectively shape outcomes for CBT projects.

5.5. Conclusion

This research has sought to explore two main questions: (1) What factors contribute to or hinder the long-term success of the examined Community-Based Tourism projects? And (2) To what degree has the use of CBT projects resulted in more resilient communities?

Regarding question one, the key positive factors that emerged were a competitive advantage through authenticity, increased cultural pride, community participation, and strengthened social and cultural cohesion. These were largely aided by collaboration with NGOs and other external partners who supported skill development and access to tourism markets. The major barriers identified were structural and institutional weaknesses (political instability, limited training, poor infrastructure, and taxation burdens) as well as dependence on NGOs, which potentially reduces long-term self-reliance and autonomy.

In relation to question two, the findings show that, in terms of resilience outcomes, the examined CBT projects appear to be strongest in social and cultural areas, moderate in economic terms, and weak in institutional and environmental aspects. It appears that CBT in Bolivia fosters partial resilience, strengthening communities socially and culturally, but is constrained by weak governance and limited institutional support. It seems that greater integration of CBT within national and regional policy frameworks and enhanced environmental and governance approaches to support sustainability could help address these issues. Overall, many of the strengths and barriers affecting the long-term success of CBT projects are the same strengths and barriers shaping levels of resilience. CR should be viewed as an ongoing process that is dependent on many interlinking factors, while long-term CBT success depends on aligning local participation with stable institutions, robust support, and environmental protection.

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