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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM THE MANIPURI COMMUNITY IN MOULVIBAZAR DISTRICT, BANGLADESH

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Abstract

This study examines the role of community-based tourism (CBT) in promoting socio-economic development among the Manipuri community in Kamalganj Upazila, Moulvibazar District, Bangladesh. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and the Garrett ranking technique, the research identifies the perceived benefits, opportunities, and barriers associated with CBT initiatives. Data were collected through interviews with homestay owners, community leaders, and farmers. The findings reveal that CBT initiatives have generated significant socio-economic benefits, including job creation, women's empowerment, income diversification, and promotion of organic food and indigenous handicrafts. Employment generation and women's empowerment were ranked as the most important benefits, reflecting CBT's potential to foster inclusive growth. However, infrastructural and financial constraints, along with environmental and organizational challenges, hinder further expansion. The study also highlights opportunities for scaling up CBT through infrastructure development, institutional support, and collaboration with local industries. Overall, CBT in the Manipuri community has demonstrated its effectiveness as a model for sustainable tourism and inclusive rural development. Strengthening institutional partnerships, improving infrastructure, and facilitating financial access can further enhance the long-term sustainability and community ownership of CBT initiatives.

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Introduction:-

Community-based tourism (CBT) has increasingly gained recognition as a sustainable strategy for promoting social and economic development in marginalized and resource-rich communities worldwide. It has also been identified as a crucial driver of economic development, especially for the least developed countries (Jiao et al., 2019). CBT aims to empower communities, protect cultural heritage, facilitate earnings, and minimize social and environmental

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impacts through fostering local participation in tourism activities (Sapkota, 2024). In many developing countries, CBT is regarded as an instrument for poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and cultural preservation (Manyara and Jones, 2007). Being a diversified and rich country in cultural ethnicity and natural resources as well, Bangladesh has remarkable potential in CBT to accelerate its inclusive growth and social development. However, despite having great potential, the actual contribution of CBT to socio-economic development often remains limited and uneven across communities. Various challenges undermine the effectiveness of CBT, including limited entrepreneurial capacity, insufficient institutional support, inadequate infrastructure, and improper benefit distribution (Reindrawati, 2023). Furthermore, communities often face barriers such as limited access to finance, poor marketing networks, and lack of tourism management skills (Wondirad et al., 2020). These obstacles often limit community participation and reduce the capacity of CBT to deliver fruitful advancement in livelihoods and well-being. Given this problem, there is a need to examine how CBT contributes to socioeconomic outcomes in local communities and what barriers and opportunities affect its success.

The Moulvibazar district, located in the northeastern part of Bangladesh, is well known for its beautiful landscapes, tea gardens, and multicultural population. This region owns several ethnic communities, including the Manipuri community, a major minority population, who resides in KamalganjUpazilla. They possess a rich cultural heritage manifested in their language, traditions, festivals, and handicrafts. Despite this cultural richness, the community faces several socio-economic challenges, for example, limited access to safe food and nutrition, lower earnings, gender inequality, and lack of economic opportunities. In this regard, CBT can be a promising way to leverage their cultural asset for economic advancement and social empowerment. CBT-related activities such as homestays, guided cultural tours, culture-based handicraft marketing, and local food and souvenir selling can enhance their livelihoods and promote cultural preservation. Therefore, based on a case, this study attempts to examine the role of CBT in enhancing socio-economic development and to explore the perceived barriers and opportunities for improving livelihoods and community well-being.

Given this background, the first objective of this study is to examine the impact of CBT on the overall community development of the Manipuri community in KamalganjUpazilla. Because community development does not imply economic betterment only but also the improvement in social capital, education, health, and cultural identity. So, by analyzing how CBT initiatives affect these dimensions, this study tries to answer an important research question—whether the CBT initiatives contribute to socio-economic development in terms of income increment, women empowerment, safe food production and consumption, and poverty reduction. While the potential of CBT is significant, its realization is often hindered by various obstacles. This raises another essential research question: what kind of challenges and opportunities do the stakeholders perceive to establish or conduct CBT activities? Identifying the obstacles will provide a clearer understanding of the current limitations faced by the Manipuri community in harnessing tourism for development. On the other hand, recognizing opportunities can highlight pathways to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of CBT initiatives. Furthermore, understanding this dual aspect of CBT is crucial for policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders aiming to maximize tourism's benefits while safeguarding local interests. Therefore, the second objective of this study is set to identify the barriers and opportunities associated with the development of community-based tourism in the Manipuri community.

Several studies are available in the literature on CBT in different countries. Ife (1995) examined the relationship of CBT with the community participation and development and mentioned that CBT can foster the controlling power of the community. Okazaki (2008) examined how CBT community participation is based on a case study of an ecotourism project. He suggests that CBT can contribute to power redistribution and collaboration processes in managing tourism practices. CBT can also play a role in meeting the environmental, social, and economic needs of regions, especially tourist places (Goodwin and Santilli, 2009). A limited amount of research highlighted the genuine output of the CBT on community livelihood (Islam & Carlsen, 2012). Novelli and Gebhardt (2007) found that CBT has a positive role in creating job opportunities. Recent studies on Bangladesh were on how CBT contributes to the development of communities, but their focus was on different regions such as Cox's Bazar, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Sylhet (Hafsa & Hossain, 2020; Patwary, 2019). These studies report significant socio-economic impacts of CBT, such as poverty alleviation and enhanced local employment. While prior research was focused on the unidimensional or dimensional socio-economic impact of CBT, this study fills the research gap in the literature by examining the multidimensional role of CBT. Moreover, while existing literature acknowledges the opportunities and benefits of CBT, there is a research gap concerning the specific barriers faced by minority groups in Bangladesh's northeastern districts and how these can be navigated or overcome to optimize tourism-driven

development. Furthermore, this study will recognize the Manipuri community's tourism potential and social and cultural distinctiveness. That could generate sustainable livelihoods, empower local actors, and preserve cultural heritage. Also, this study is relevant for policymakers, development practitioners, and tourism stakeholders aiming to implement inclusive tourism frameworks attentive to minority needs and capabilities.

Review of Literature:-

Around the world, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been promoted since the late 1970s as an alternative to mass tourism (Phoung et al., 2023). Community-based tourism empowers local residents to manage tourism resources, ensuring they benefit from activities like homestays and cultural experiences while conserving natural and cultural assets, as highlighted in various studies across Latin America and Southeast Asia (Lo and Janta, 2020). It also empowers indigenous communities by creating economic opportunities, supporting cultural heritage, and safeguarding the environment, particularly when communities possess secure rights, strong leadership, training, and market access (Lazic and Gasparini, 2023). In Bangladesh, Community-Based Tourism programs have been initiated in several protected areas, including coastal, forest-edge, and hill regions, as part of the Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) project, promoting ecotourism and alternative income generation for rural development (Islam et al., 2013).

Community-based ecotourism has led to additional household income and livelihood diversification, enhancing cultural pride among locals (Zabeen et al., 2023). However, challenges persist, including weak infrastructure, the seasonal nature of tourism, and limited business skills, which restricts income (Sarker, 2024). Furthermore, there are concerns regarding unequal benefit-sharing among community members. While the local community generally views ecotourism positively, addressing these obstacles is critical for sustainable development and equitable growth in the sector (Tiwari et al., 2024). The Sylhet region, known for its tea gardens, tropical forests, and waterfalls, has potential for Community-Based Tourism (CBT) (Halim et al., 2022). Community-based tourism in Sreemangal promotes economic sustainability by creating employment opportunities, enhancing profit distribution, and preserving local cultures, such as those in Manipur villages, while also improving living standards and reducing poverty (Singha, 2024; Lisam, 2023). Several factors influence tourism product and service demand in Bangladesh, including community leadership, infrastructure, hospitality training, and policy frameworks, which collectively support the growth of tourism and enhance the country's potential as an international tourism hub (Nekmahmud and Hasan, 2021).

CBT relies on active involvement from the local community. This makes the creation of community events that favor this type of tourism critical, as they help build relationships between locals and visitors. To support this, various public administrations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private organizations, and the local community should collaborate. According to Nyaupane et al. (2006), the main challenges faced by local communities when implementing tourism projects include limited financial resources, infrastructure, or expertise; cultural restrictions; and potential conflicts among different public agencies. Simultaneously, factors such as stakeholder inclusion, assessment of personal and collective benefits, goal setting, and decision analysis are deemed crucial for CBT implementation (Kibicho, 2008). The main benefits of community tourism include direct economic gains for families, socioeconomic development, and sustainable diversification of lifestyles (Rastegar, 2010; Manyara and Jones, 2007). CBT is an effective way to promote policy coordination, prevent conflicts among various tourism actors, and generate synergies through the exchange of knowledge, analysis, and skills among community members (Kibicho, 2008).

Methodology:-

Research design and data collection:-

This research employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches with a ranking-based analysis to provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of community-based tourism in the Manipuri community. The study focused on Vanubil village in Kamalganj Upazila under Moulvibazar district, where CBT initiatives were active. The study focused on key informants associated with community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives who belong to the Manipuri community. The data consists of primary information collected from those informants, which includes various stakeholders such as owners of community-based homestays, neighbors, community leaders, and agricultural farmers of the study area. The purposive sampling technique was used in this study to collect qualitative data from key informants (i.e., homestay providers and community leaders) using KII, as well as convenience

sampling to collect quantitative data from other stakeholders through face-to-face interview and then documented. Thereafter, the data was analyzed to answer the research question of this study.

In the study area, there are 10 homestays that provide accommodation, pesticide-free food, transportation facilities, and guidance to tourists and sell indigenous handicrafts. Therefore, primary data through interviews was obtained from 10 homestay providers, 2 community leaders, 12 farmers, and 16 community people. Data was collected from informants in the month of September, 2025.

Garrett's ranking technique:-

Garrett's ranking technique (Garrett and Woodworth, 1969) was employed in this study to find out the most important benefits of community-based tourism and the opportunities and barriers for the stakeholders. Stakeholders were asked to rank their realized benefits, opportunities, and benefits. After collecting their responses, the data was analyzed using the following formula proposed by Henry Garrett (Garrett and Woodworth, 1969).

$$\text{Percent position} = \frac{100(R_{jk} - 0.50)}{N_k} \dots \dots (1)$$

where, R_{jk} is the rank given to j^{th} statement by k^{th} stakeholder, and N_k is the number of statements ranked by the k^{th} stakeholder. The percent position for each rank was converted to scores by utilizing the table proposed by Garrett and Woodworth (1969). For each statement, all the scores provided by stakeholders were added together and then divided by the total number of stakeholders. This estimated the average score for each statement. The statements were then arranged from the highest to the lowest average score, and ranks were given based on these scores.

Results:-

Manipuri community-based tourism and its management:-

The community-based tourism (CBT) initiative was established in 2018 by 10 Manipuri people as a locally driven effort to promote sustainable rural tourism while creating livelihood opportunities in the Vanubil village of Kamalganjupazilla of Moulvibazar district. The CBT initiative began with a homestay model and was supported infrastructurally by the local administration and the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB). Later, at the growing stage, the CBT initiatives received support from several non-government organizations such as Patakuri and Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF). The establishment of a ten-member management committee ensured participatory decision-making and local ownership from the outset.

At the initial stage, the CBT project faced several adaptation challenges, including community resistance and limited infrastructure. Despite these barriers, community members gradually accepted the initiative, recognizing its potential for income generation and local development. Initial investments were made personally by one founder, who also took on multiple roles, including that of a tourist guide. In the absence of basic facilities such as restrooms, he reinvested early earnings to build necessary amenities. Later all partners contributed to investments. However, institutional support from BTB was critical in overcoming infrastructural constraints and legitimizing the initiative at an early stage.

Community control:-

The community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives Vanubil village represents a considerable level of community control characterized by local ownership and shared decision-making. Since the initiative was founded by 10 members, the planning and implementation decision remains in their hands. Though the CBT initiatives received technical and infrastructural support from the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and several non-government organizations, these external actors primarily played facilitative rather than directive roles. Farmers are only in the role of supplying chemical- and pesticide-free crops and vegetables to homestay owners. Revenue distribution and tourist accommodation within the community follow a cyclic system, preventing benefit concentration and promoting collective welfare. When conflicts arise, they are resolved internally through community deliberation. Overall, the CBT initiative reflects a high degree of self-governance and local empowerment, with external agencies serving as supportive partners rather than controlling authorities.

Benefits of CBT:-

The CBT initiatives basically started with the homestay model. Later, it has incorporated all types of tourism activities. The CBT initiatives have created permanent employment for twenty individuals within the community so far, twelve women and eight men, while also hiring additional workers throughout tourist seasons. Priority was consistently given to women in recruitment, reflecting a commitment to gender inclusion and empowerment. Such

gender-sensitive employment practices are consistent with the objectives of CBT to foster equitable socio-economic participation. The homestay offers an integrated tourism package that includes accommodation, guiding, and transportation services. Together with the local farmers within their community, the homestay owners offer organic food items to their tourists. Tourists can stay and enjoy local food. Thus, the indigenous food items gain popularity among the mainstream population. It has created dual benefits to the community. On the one hand, the tourist could enjoy the safe food, while owners of homestays and local farmers earned higher revenue for their agro-food items. Farmers supply synthetic inputs and traditional food items free to homestay owners as well as sell to tourists. Tourists can enjoy and learn about the culture and traditional lifestyle of the Manipuri community by visiting surroundings within the community with the help of local tourist guides. Thus, this CBT created employment opportunities for local people who are educated but unemployed as well as skilled drivers. The CBT initiatives attract a large number of tourists throughout the year, which also increased the earnings of vehicle owners of the community and offered diversified income opportunities for the community. Manipuri people are well known for their indigenous style of making dresses and handicrafts. The CBT initiative created a spillover effect of an increment in the sale of these dresses and handicrafts and thus improved the livelihood of the community. Tourists have also contributed to community welfare initiatives, such as providing educational materials to local primary schools and donating health-supportive items.

Revenue distribution follows a cyclic order, allowing benefits to circulate within the community rather than concentrating in a single actor's hands. This system strengthens community cohesion and maintains a sense of collective ownership. The homestay has gained attention from both domestic and international tourists, with foreign visitors outnumbering Bangladeshi tourists. Additionally, content creators have begun featuring the destination, indirectly promoting it to wider audiences. Thus, the initiative advertises the potentiality of the community to improve their livelihood and affects other people both within and outside of the community to engage with CBT activities. Overall, the CBT initiative is playing a significant role in poverty reduction, livelihood improvement, and the well-being of the Manipuri community through diversifying employment opportunities, fostering higher earnings, women's empowerment, community participation, and equality; encouraging safe food production (beneficial for both the environment and human health); and promoting community welfare activities.



Figure 1: Socio-economic outcomes of community-based tourism (CBT)

Assessment of socio-economic benefits:-

After the collection of information from the stakeholders, the stakeholders were asked to rank their perceived benefits to provide statistical strength to their qualitative information. The stakeholders ranked ten identified benefits from least important (1) to most important (5). The collected rank-based information was then analyzed using the

Garret ranking technique (Garrett and Woodworth, 1969). The findings of Garrett's ranking analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Stakeholders ranking score for benefits of community-based tourism

Benefits	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Total Garrett score	Average Garrett score	Rank
Revenue from CBT supports collective wellbeing.	6	18	9	6	1	40	2424	60.60	6
Tourists contribute to community welfare initiatives	13	20	4	3	0	40	2298	57.45	10
CBT attracts domestic and international tourists.	9	17	10	4	0	40	2364	59.10	9
CBT fosters community cohesion and a sense of shared ownership.	8	19	7	4	2	40	2401	60.03	8
CBT encourages the production and sale of organic and traditional food	4	18	7	10	1	40	2474	61.85	5
Tourists can learn about local culture, traditions, and indigenous practices.	6	20	6	7	1	40	2421	60.53	7
CBT has increased the sales of local handicrafts and traditional dresses.	4	14	9	8	5	40	2552	63.80	4
Participation in CBT has increased income	2	15	5	14	4	40	2593	64.82	3
CBT prioritizes women's participation and empowerment	2	12	5	19	2	40	2607	65.18	2
CBT initiatives have created employment opportunities	0	11	12	9	8	40	2672	66.80	1
Garrett Tabulated Value	52	58	63	70	81				

Source: Authors estimation, 2025

The result shows that job opportunity creation is the most significant benefit of CBT, with an average Garrett score of 66.80. Stakeholders perceive CBT as an important source of job opportunities within the community. Stakeholders ranked women's participation and empowerment as the second most important benefit (65.18), highlighting the role of CBT in promoting gender-inclusive development. Income generation was also highly valued, with "Participation in CBT has increased income" and "CBT has increased the sales of local handicrafts and traditional dresses" ranked third (64.82) and fourth (63.80), respectively. The production and sale of organic and traditional food were ranked fifth (61.85), reflecting additional economic benefits linked to local entrepreneurship. Cultural and social benefits, such as fostering community cohesion (rank 8, 60.03) and enabling tourists to learn about local culture and traditions (rank 7, 60.53), were recognized but considered secondary to direct economic impacts. Similarly, benefits related to collective welfare, including "Revenue from CBT supports collective wellbeing" (rank 6, 60.60) and "Tourists contribute to community welfare initiatives" (rank 10, 57.45), were perceived as less influential in motivating stakeholder participation.

Overall, the findings suggest that stakeholders prioritize the direct economic benefits of CBT, particularly employment, income generation, and women's empowerment, over broader social or collective welfare benefits. This indicates that while CBT contributes to holistic community development, its immediate economic impact is the primary driver of stakeholder engagement and support.

Opportunities and barriers of community-based tourism:-

Table 2 showcases the perceived opportunities of the CBT initiative based on Garrett ranking scores from stakeholders. The highest-ranked opportunity is the increase of tourist accommodation capacity (average Garrett score 48.23), highlighting its potential to enhance revenue and employment. That is followed by collaboration with garment owners for scaling up local clothing products (45.13) and encouraging other community members to participate (44.95), reflecting the importance of partnerships and community engagement. Opportunities related to cultural preservation, institutional support, and environmental contribution received comparatively lower scores, indicating they are recognized but less prioritized.

Table 2. Opportunities of community-based tourism

Benefits	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Total Garrett score	Average Garrett score	Rank
Continuation of institutional support make the initiative at international standard	5	4	3	2	1	40	1646	41.15	5
Integration of mainstream tradition with community tradition-based handicrafts and other products	9	18	7	6	0	40	1730	43.25	4
Contribute to environment betterment	5	23	3	9	0	40	1446	36.15	6
Encouragement for other community people	14	20	5	1	0	40	1798	44.95	3
Collaboration with garment owners for scaling up clothing products	7	15	5	13	0	40	1805	45.13	2
Increase of tourist accommodation capacity	5	15	13	6	1	40	1929	48.23	1
Garrett Tabulated Value	37	46	54	63	77				

Source: Authors estimation, 2025

Qualitative observations support these findings. The ongoing process of partnerships with Bangladesh garment manufacturers may have facilitated product diversification and integration of traditional Bengali designs, adding value to local handicrafts. The homestays have expanded capacity to host up to 100 tourists at one homestay, aligning with the highest-ranked opportunity. Continued support from the Bangladesh Tourism Board and stakeholders such as the Patakuri Society (i.e., an NGO) strengthens credibility while maintaining financial autonomy. Overall, the results suggest that scaling infrastructure, fostering collaborations, and promoting community involvement are central to maximizing CBT benefits.

However, the barriers faced by community-based tourism initiatives are presented in Table 3, using the similar Garrett ranking method. The findings indicate that poor road infrastructure is perceived as the most critical barrier, with the highest average Garrett score of 48.95. This suggests that inadequate access roads significantly limit the movement of tourists and goods, directly affecting the sustainability and growth of CBT activities. Financial constraints rank second, with an average Garrett score of 45.58. This reflects challenges in securing sufficient funding for operations, maintenance, and expansion, which can hinder the ability of communities to effectively manage tourism initiatives. Extreme heat conditions are identified as the third most significant barrier (average score 40.45). This indicates that climatic factors, such as high temperatures, affect both tourist comfort and community participation in tourism activities. Security issues follow closely in fourth place, with an average score of 40.25, highlighting the need for measures to ensure tourist and resident safety to maintain trust and visitation. Finally, overdependency on the founders is ranked lowest (average score 38.73), suggesting that reliance on a few individuals for leadership or management may pose challenges but is perceived as less severe compared to infrastructure, financial, and environmental barriers.

Overall, the Garrett ranking emphasizes that infrastructural and financial issues are the most pressing challenges for CBT development, while environmental and organizational factors are also relevant but comparatively less critical. Addressing these barriers strategically can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives.

Table 3. Barriers of community-based tourism

Benefits	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Total Garrett score	Average Garrett score	Rank
Security issues	10	20	3	7	0	40	1610	40.25	4
Extreme heat conditions	7	24	5	4	0	40	1618	40.45	3
Financial constraints	7	13	8	11	1	40	1823	45.58	2
Poor road infrastructure	2	15	10	11	2	40	1958	48.95	1

Overdependence on the founders	11	20	7	1	1	40	1549	38.73	5
Garrett Tabulated Value	24	40	50	60	75				

Source: Authors estimation, 2025.

Discussion:-

The implementation of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) initiatives in the Manipuri community has resulted in significant socio-economic benefits, aligning with broader objectives of sustainable development. The creation of permanent employment for community members, with a focus on women, underscores the transformative potential of CBT in fostering inclusive economic growth. This finding is consistent with the outcome of Jackson (2025). He states that this approach not only provides stable income sources but also contributes to poverty alleviation by offering alternative livelihoods to the community. The Garrett ranking analysis further highlights the significance of employment opportunities, with stakeholders ranking job creation as the most substantial benefit of CBT. The prioritization of women's participation in CBT initiatives reflects a commitment to gender inclusivity and empowerment. By engaging women in various aspects of tourism, such as hospitality, guiding, and handicraft production, CBT contributes to enhancing their economic independence and social status. Similar results are found in the study of Nikjoo et al. (2025), who mentioned that women's empowerment is crucial for achieving broader development goals and fostering gender equality within the community is possible through tourism.

The involvement of local farmers in supplying organic food to homestays and the sale of traditional handicrafts to tourists have diversified income streams for the community. These activities not only increase household earnings but also promote the preservation and appreciation of indigenous culture and traditions (Bellver, 2023). The positive reception of indigenous food items and handicrafts among tourists indicates a growing interest in authentic cultural experiences, which CBT effectively facilitates. This aligns with findings by Jackson (2025), who emphasized the role of CBT in enhancing cultural heritage and local entrepreneurship.

CBT initiatives have fostered a sense of community cohesion and collective ownership, as evidenced by the cyclic revenue distribution model that ensures benefits circulate within the community. This approach strengthens social ties and encourages active participation in community welfare activities, such as donations to local schools and health initiatives. The Garrett ranking analysis reflects this sentiment, with stakeholders recognizing the importance of community welfare contributions, albeit ranking them lower than direct economic benefits.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study identifies several barriers to the effective development of CBT. Poor road infrastructure emerged as the most significant obstacle, limiting access for tourists and affecting the overall tourism experience. Financial constraints also pose challenges, hindering the expansion and sustainability of CBT initiatives. Addressing these infrastructural and financial issues is essential for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of CBT (Dias et al., 2024). These findings are consistent with studies by Hall and Richards (2000) and Tolkach and King (2015), who highlighted the importance of investing in local infrastructure and fostering partnerships to overcome such barriers.

In conclusion, the CBT initiatives in the Manipuri community have demonstrated substantial benefits in terms of employment creation, women's empowerment, income diversification, and cultural preservation. However, to maximize these benefits and ensure the long-term sustainability of CBT, it is imperative to address the identified barriers, particularly those related to infrastructure and financial resources. By doing so, CBT can continue to serve as a viable model for sustainable community development in rural areas.

Conclusion:-

The findings confirm that community-based tourism (CBT) has made a substantial contribution to improving the livelihoods of the Manipuri community by creating employment, diversifying income sources, and empowering women. CBT also promotes cultural preservation and enhances community cohesion through participatory management and equitable benefit distribution. The integration of local agricultural and cultural products into tourism activities strengthens both environmental sustainability and cultural identity.

However, the persistence of inadequate infrastructure, limited financial access, and environmental constraints continues to limit the potential of CBT to scale up. Addressing these barriers requires targeted policy interventions. Policymakers should prioritize infrastructure improvements, particularly road connectivity, to facilitate tourist

access and logistics. Expanding access to low-interest credit and financial incentives would help local entrepreneurs upgrade facilities and diversify services. Strengthened institutional partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations are essential to provide technical training, marketing assistance, and managerial capacity building. In addition, promoting gender-inclusive tourism policies can sustain women's participation and leadership in CBT ventures. Overall, effective policy support, financial inclusion, and infrastructure enhancement can ensure the long-term sustainability of CBT and maximize its role in achieving inclusive rural development in Bangladesh.

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