LEISURE & TOURISM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Community-based tourism and animals: Theorising the relationship
Andrea Giampiccoli1, Dr. Oliver Mtapuri2* and Sean Jugmohan3

Abstract: There is a growing interest in the role of animals in tourism linked to conservation and their care as well as their contribution to the tourism experience. This article is based on a review of literature. It presents a general framework of relationships between community-based tourism (CBT) and animals. The framework is based on four themes, namely: management, human perspective, the type of relationship, and the role of animals. Animals can be an attraction on their own; they could be used for traction and can be game (meat) for tourists. The CBT-animal framework is the major contribution of this article. For practice, it is a function of management to guide matters related to animal welfare and inform the livelihood strategies of CBT members.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS
Andrea Giampiccoli has a PhD in Geography from the University of KwaZulu Natal. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Durban University of Technology in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism. His main area of research interest is tourism with a focus on Community-based Tourism. His quest is to better understand Community-Based Tourism, its nature, characteristics and principles in order to find innovative ways for sustainable communities in a context of just tourism. His other areas of interest include tourism development theories, sport events, food and hospitality.

Oliver Mtapuri has a PhD in Development Studies from the University of KwaZulu. His area of research interest includes poverty and inequality, redistribution, community-based tourism, innovation, public employment programmes, climate change, research methodologies and project management. Oliver is the Academic Leader for Research in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal.

Sean Jugmohan has a doctorate in Tourism from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, cape Town. His research interests include Tourism Curriculum, Tourism Graduate Employment and Community-based Tourism in which he has published. He is the current Acting Head of School in the Business Studies Unit in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
This article highlight the importance of the relationship between Community-based tourism and animals. It argues that this relationship is subtle because animals are viewed through various lenses, as animals as an attraction, as game, as “workers,” as “entertainers,” for hunting and so on. At the same time, there is a growing interest among tourists to see animals in the wild as opposed to seeing them in captivity, such as zoos. Also, tourists are yearning for more interaction with unusual and endangered animals. Wildlife tourism has socio-economic benefits such as jobs and incomes, including the protection of the environment if managed well through anti-poaching initiatives, conservation, and preservation. Hence, this article supports the widespread establishment of CBT ventures as they are usually owned, managed, and controlled by local people. As such, local people should be the vanguard in the protection of animals because communities should have a vested interest in the welfare and conservation of their animals. The article supports animal rights.
1. Introduction

Tourism continues to grow and expand to new destinations. The United Nations’ World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has observed huge expansion in the past six decades with consistent growth despite global economic shocks (UNWTO, 2015, p. 2). Alongside this, there has been renewed and ever-increasing interest in the role played by animals in tourism (see Carr, 2009). This article reflects on the relationship between tourism and animals. The growing role of animals in the tourism experience is attributable to new patterns and desires for new experiences. This has been accompanied by a concomitant surge in recognition of the rights of animals (Carr, 2009, p. 409).

While not devoted to ethical issues, this article proposes a relationship framework that illustrates aspects of the interconnections and relationships that could exist between animals and community-based tourism (CBT) contexts. New forms of development that recognise the equal importance of human and non-human biospheric life, and growing concern in relation to conservation and the environment have reignited an interest in the relationship between tourism and the environment in the past two decades (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001, p. 31). Tourists’ desire for interaction with natural phenomena is evident in “increasing demand to experience these, and increasing value being placed on, animals in the wild, as opposed to those in captive or semi-captive situations” (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001, p. 31), resulting in increased marketing of leisure and wildlife destinations (Carr, 2009; p. 409; see also Markwell, 2015a). While studies on the impact of tourism on animals began as early as the 1970s (Markwell, 2015a, p. 5), Carvalheda Reis (2009, p. 573) notes that these focused on this relationship from the perspectives of various disciplines. Only recently has interest been shown in studying the role of animals in tourists’ leisure experiences in different contexts and places. Carvalheda Reis (2009, p. 573) notes that tourism scholars have focused on specific themes, including game management in tourism ventures, the manifestations and impacts of hunting tourism in different local communities and hunting as a sustainable tourism alternative. Studies have also been conducted on the role of wildlife, ecotourism, poaching and so on (see Fitzgerald & Stronza, 2016; Geffroy et al., 2016). Markwell (2015a, p. 6) proposed a model that characterises the tourism-animal relationship based on the phases of the tourist experience, namely, “pre-travel decision making; travel to destination; at-destination experience; and post-travel remembering, and feeds into the decision-making process for forthcoming trips” in the corresponding tourist regions (generation region, transit region and destination region). Each of these phases gives rise to a specific tourism-animal relationship. For example, in the pre-travel phase—the generation region—tourists make decisions about their forthcoming trips and about their experiences with animals such that animals are not simply objects of advertisements in the media, but part of the experience (Markwell, 2015a, p. 6). The purpose and usefulness of the work rest in valourising and propagating the value of both animals and humans in tourism (given the re-recognition of the value of animals in the wild (wildlife) and growing abhorrence of animals in captivity). This re-awakening is happening against a backdrop of a general consensus that tourism plays an important role in securing livelihoods, which in turn necessitated a re-look of this relationship with an animal-human face.

The emergence of a body of literature on tourism’s impact on animals in the 1970s (Markwell, 2015a, p. 5) coincided with the birth of CBT that is rooted in alternative development stances of the time. Community-based tourism aims to achieve both “conservation and development” (Giampiccoli, 2015, p. 678). While it encompasses different formulations, it is promoted as a tool for community development, conservation of the environment and poverty alleviation (Novelli, 2016, p. 72). Scholars have proposed numerous CBT models (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2016, p. 155), with some tracing the link between CBT and nature or wildlife (see for example, Goh, 2015; Sebele, 2010). However, to the best of our knowledge, no previous work has focused specifically on a CBT-animal relationship framework.

Keywords: tourism; community-based tourism; ecotourism; animals

Subjects: Tourism; Tourism Geography; Tourism Management; Tourism Marketing; Tourism Planning and Policy; Economics of Tourism; Niche Tourism; The Tourism Industry; Tourism and the Environment; Tourism Behaviour; Tourism Development/Impacts
While we recognise the importance of the debate on ethical or animal rights issues (see, for example, Carvalhêdo Reis, 2009; Fennell, 2012; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009), this article does not focus on animal rights. However, we support the view that specific regulations, certification and training should be put in place to curb unethical exploitation and suffering of animals (see examples in the World Society for the Protection of Animals, 2012, p. 50).

Inspired by Markwell (2015a) and Carvalhêdo Reis (2009, p. 573) and given the apparent lack of a CBT-animal relationship framework, the article proposes a general framework of relationships between CBT and animals. This framework is intended as a platform to launch further theoretical and empirical research on this topic. While the article advances a general CBT-animal framework, further studies could enhance the framework and add to the debate on CBT-animal relationships.

2. Materials and methods

This is a review article based on available documents, articles and other secondary sources. No primary data were collected. As such, it presents a literature review on the relationship between tourism and animals and the main issues relating to CBT. Content analysis was employed to systematically identify common issues in the texts which were read and interpreted for their meaning in understanding the relationships between humans and animals in tourism. The first section highlights the various types of relationships that exist between tourism and animals. This is followed by the proposed CBT-animal relationship framework.

3. Literature review

The interrelations between animals and humans have a long and complex history. Over time, humans have lived with animals and had different relationships with them as a source of food and income, and as domestic pets (Curtin, 2009, p. 452). In more recent time, animals have become a tourist attraction. Orams (2002, p. 287) observes that demand for interaction with wild, unusual and endangered animals has increased at a rapid rate (UNEP/CMS, 2006, p. 10). The World Society for the Protection of Animals (World Society for the Protection of Animals, 2012, p. 6) noted that, “Animals—both domestic and wild—are an important component of sustainable ecotourism”. This industry is also economically lucrative; in 2012, the global whale watching industry employed 13,000 people and generated 2.1 USD billion annually.

The relationship between wildlife watching and tourism varies, and is intertwined with several other tourist activities (UNEP/CMS, 2006, p. 10) such as simple observation and snorkeling (see UNEP/CMS, 2006, p. 14). While wildlife tourism has raised controversies such as the dangers involved in feeding wildlife, which pose risks for the animals as well as tourists, it offers important socio-economic and environmental benefits (Orams, 2002, p. 290). It has been argued

that a challenge involved in viewing wildlife in the wild (as opposed to in captive or semi-captive settings) is that the reliability of sighting the animal/s is reduced. The use of food to attract the wildlife so that they can be viewed is therefore attractive for tourists and tourism operators alike because it increases the likelihood of actually sighting the animals. This is particularly important for commercial tourism operators who base their business on the wildlife because without reliable sighting of the animals their financial viability is compromised. (Orams, 2002, p. 283)

Moreover, not all animals attract the same attention: “some animal species are more charismatic and attractive than others in a tourism context” (Curtin, 2009, p. 453). Debate on the value of animals in all forms of tourism continues. A recent study concluded that “The fundamental characteristics of wildlife tourism activities do not lend themselves to valuation at the individual animal level” (Catlin et al., 2013, p. 97). Cohen (2009) identifies four different settings for interaction between animals and tourists, namely, fully-natural settings, semi-natural settings, semi-contrived settings, and fully-contrived settings.
While wildlife tourism is the main form of interaction between animals and tourists, numerous interrelationships also occur. Fennell (2012, p. 9) observes that animals play many roles in the name of human entertainment and progress. A recent book edited by Markwell (2015b) highlights that:

Animals contribute to tourism in multiple ways: as attractions in their own right—alive or dead, wild or captive; as forms of transportation; symbolically as destination icons; as travel companions; and as components of regional cuisine [...] animals, whether invertebrate or vertebrate, coldblooded or warm-blooded, friendly or otherwise, intersect with tourists and tourism in a multitude of diverse ways. (Markwell, 2015a, p. 1)

Some animals perform various “tourism” tasks. For example, tourists enjoy elephant riding, elephant shows in general, elephant painting, elephant dancing, elephants playing music, soccer and basketball and other activities (see Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, p. 444). The book also debates the value of animals in tourism and the specific roles and conditions they experience, including positive and negative aspects. It has been noted that while involvement of elephants “features negative trade-offs, tourism-related work, particularly in elephant camps, represents the most optimal solution for promoting the welfare of domesticated elephants, especially in light of prevailing political, economic, cultural, and environmental circumstances in Thailand” (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, p. 445).

The relationship between tourism (tourists) and animals is likely to have negative aspects. Animals can pose a danger to tourists in “seemingly unexpected” situations such as when a British tourist in Thailand was thrown from the back of an elephant and killed during a trek (Quinn, 2016) or when an elephant (Sambo) “aged between 40 and 45, died after walking for 40 minutes, carrying two tourists, one at a time, between two temples in an ancient archaeological complex” (Morris, 2016). The importance of proper management of the relationship between animals and tourism is acknowledged by ABTA, which proposes that:

In many tourism destinations around the world, opportunities to view or interact with wildlife are commonly offered and very popular with a large number of consumers. Whilst tourism can be a means for positive interactions between tourists and animals, where such attractions are not carefully managed or do not exhibit best practice there is the potential that such attractions can jeopardise animal welfare or the customer experience. In recognition of this and as part of our commitment to achieve better holidays to live to and visit, in 2010 ABTA established both an animal welfare working group and an industry animal welfare strategy in an industry first move (ABTA, online a).

The organisation subsequently formulated The Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism (see ABTA, 2013). These include training those involved with animals in the tourism sector as well as the various aspects and animals that should be considered. The guidelines note that dedicated manuals are available regarding animals, dolphins and elephants in captive environments, wildlife viewing and as working animals. This has assisted in promoting animal interaction in tourism characterised by “Non-consumptive forms, for instance, photographic and walking safaris, birdwatching, whale-watching, reef-diving, and the viewing of focal species (species that are part of a conservation project) such as nesting turtles, bears, gorillas, sharks, and polar bears” (ABTA, 2013, p. 12).

The debate on animals and tourism within the CBT milieu, which this article aims to contribute to, needs to be deepened in order to clarify the nature and forms of the interaction, given that CBT is community based, emancipatory and environmentally-conscious. Smith and Duffy (2003, p. 145) state that

... while debates about community-based tourism projects might seem to be mainly about human rights, utility or distributive justice, they are further complicated by ethical questions concerning our ‘right’ to treat animals and the environment simply as a resource for the benefit of human communities. One of the problems with so many of the ethical frameworks we have examined has been the fact that they ignore or exclude our ethical relations to our wider non-human environment. While ‘nature’ does have its advocates, especially in the
form of various conservation lobbies, it appears in sustainable development’s discourses largely as a resource, as something to be made use of simply for human ends or purposes.

This implies that while issues of community emancipation, the environment, empowerment, and poverty are important, animal rights should be given the attention they deserve. A Malaysian study observes that “The social responsibility and sustainability rooted within the ethical conscience of poverty reduction projects became one of the key reasons motivating tourists to visit CBT projects. As mentioned by some tourists in the villages, ‘we are not here just to appreciate the animals; it is something more than that’” (Goh, 2015, p. 48). It is against this background that we propose a relationship framework that illustrates aspects of the interrelation that could exist between animals and CBT contexts.

Community-based tourism has its roots in alternative development approaches and emerged in the 1970 s and the 1980 s, with the Canadian government possibly being “the first Government to officially propose, plan and put forward a CBT project” (Giampiccoli, 2015, p. 679). Its proponents argued that it could contribute to income redistribution, cultural rejuvenation and conservation of natural resources (Jitpakdee et al., 2016, p. 407). Although the literature offers various definitions and interpretations of CBT, at its core it is a type of tourism specifically designed to benefit disadvantaged community members; it should thus be controlled, owned, managed and planned by community members (see Giampiccoli, 2015; Jitpakdee et al., 2016, p. 408).

A study conducted in Thailand concluded that, compared to conventional tourism, CBT offers the following advantages:

1) the full ownership of the CBT belongs to local members, which makes all of the local people the owner of the tourism project, 2) The development of the CBT encourages local members to participate in each activity namely policy-making, planning, tourism activity creating, income generating, and profit distributing, and 3) the implementation of the CBT allows both local people and tourists to understand and appreciate more the cultural differences between them. (Jitpakdee et al., 2016, p. 408)

The hallmarks of CBT are that it empowers communities, making them custodians of their own resources and involving them in planning and the distribution of profits. It also offers tourists a more holistic experience of the destination, through for example, “an authentic homestay ... [by means of] accommodation in the host family’s home. Visitors have the opportunity, for a nominal fee, to experience and learn simple or traditional lifestyles through close interactions and exchanges with the host family, including partaking in some of the host family’s daily activities” (Boonratana, 2010, p. 286). This characteristic of CBT, which is not found in conventional tourism, can enhance the relationship with animals. Thus, CBT is about utilisation and conservation (for continuity) of own resources for the benefit of many in the community.

4. Discussion: towards a framework for Animal-CBT relationships

The section on Protecting Livelihoods in ABTA’s (2013, p. 37) The Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism states that “local people are well placed to protect wildlife if they derive a benefit from it”; therefore, it is important that “the tourism industry supports communities who run their own tourism enterprises, particularly in wildlife tourism areas, in order to secure sustainable livelihoods”. Communities are more likely to be interested in the health and welfare of animals as their own welfare depends on them (ABTA, 2013, p. 37).

The relationship between animals and CBT is demonstrated in a horse riding project within a CBT context on the South African Wild Coast (see Jugmohan et al., 2016, p. 310), where tourists experience a horse and hiking trail (HTT) (Jugmohan et al., 2016, p. 313). The CAMPFIRE project is another example, in which “tourism heavily relies on sport hunting for conservation, especially elephants” (Smith & Duffy, 2003, p. 145). Many other relationships have been established between
CBT and various types of animals. The WWF (2014) cites a project that revolves around dolphins, but encompasses other activities that benefit the community. While on the dolphin tour, tourists also participate in community projects such as constructing toilets and using their respective skills to undertake repairs in the village. Such multiple activities enable tourists to both enjoy a unique experience and make a difference in the lives of the host community. The hosts are able to showcase their culture and heritage and everyday way of life.

Communities have also taken advantage of historical seasonal animal migrations to promote CBT. An example is the “collective seasonal migration of animals and shepherds between two distinct and distant pastures connected by special routes” in the region of Molise in Italy (see Germano et al., 2015).

Ndlovu and Rogerson (2004, p. 445) study on a CBT horse trail in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa concluded that “backward and forward linkages from the tourism project into the local economy further expand the direct and indirect benefits such as employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.” They identified three groups that benefit directly from the involvement of animals in CBT projects, namely, horse owners, a poultry group, and a piggery (Ndlovu & Rogerson, 2004, p. 446). The study notes that local income opportunities include taking care of the horses and horse rides (Ndlovu & Rogerson, 2004, p. 446).

A tourist describes his experience of a holiday in Ethiopia:

The highlight was some community-based tourism, a magical four-day trek across the highlands near Lalibela. First the community bit. The trek consisted of daily walks, with the next village providing a donkey for the bags […] a donkey minder + local guide (we also had an English speaking guide from the central CBT organization).

This excerpt points to the different benefits accruing to local community members and tourists due to the relationship between CBT and animals. Tourists enjoy the unique local experience, while community members earn an income from providing donkeys for transportation and by working as donkey minders and guides.

This suggests that working animals can be considered in two contexts: directly involved with tourists, such as during horse or donkey rides or indirectly involved, such as assisting in the collection of wood or water for tourists. In the second case, it is worth noting that the number of trips or the load transported can increase as households need extra wood/water to cater for tourists. Referring to more direct involvement of animals with tourists, a CBT study on South Africa’s Wild Coast noted that “Horse and hiking trails were popular in the village and were core activities of the tourism business; however, the death of the horses diminished the horse trail venture. The horses contracted a virus and died” (Jugmohan, 2015, p. 91). Management of the horses was hampered by a lack of proper training related to horses and/or CBT assets management (see Jugmohan, 2015, pp. 98, 143). This can have long-term repercussions; Jugmohan (2015: p. 154) notes that the horses could not be replaced because of a lack of funding. It highlights the need for communities to be capacitated in business skills and with knowledge of funding sources and opportunities. In the same project “certain guests commented on the poor condition and exhaustion of the horses, and the need for care” (Jugmohan, 2015, p. 143), creating a bad image of management of the CBT project by its members. Severely disadvantaged community members can also “exhaust” working animals, in this case horses, not so much because they do not understand how to look after them, but due to the pressure to earn an income, as any extra “cents” are important in economically disadvantaged households. It is improper to pass judgment without a proper investigation into the circumstances, but responsibility should be taken by all entities involved in the specific CBT project. Giampiccoli et al. (2014, p. 664) observe that:

Communities are often judged as the guilty party when development projects do not work. The community must certainly take ownership, responsibility and accountability in a project.
and cannot hide behind other actors' inadequate work or remain passive in a ‘begging/dependency’ approach. However, they are becoming the only guilty party while external structures are exonerated from their own possible intentional or unintentional wrongdoing and incapacity. The failure of a project and the blame on the local communities is institutionalized through the interpretation that communities are not responsible, unappreciative and not dedicated enough to achieve success.

Specific training and proper understanding of animals in the various CBT contexts are necessary for both the community members involved in CBT and external facilitators. Capacity building should be a key precondition for CBT development (see Jugmohan & Steyn, 2015). It should be understood in a holistic sense, going beyond CBT specific matters to positively affect and contribute to other spheres of community development. Thus, training should prioritise and focus “in a way that promotes skill/education in tourism with a spin-off in other community development matters—CBT’s capacity-building should be a ‘training ground’ for general individual and community development matters” (Saayman & Giampiccoli, 2016, p. 152).

Based on the literature review and the relationships between CBT and animals discussed above, an initial general framework of relationships between CBT and animals is proposed (see Figure 1). Given the absence of a similar framework, it is intended as a foundational contribution upon which further studies can scaffold and enhance its scope.
The framework consists of four main components, namely, management, CBT-tourism perspective, type of relationship, and the role of the animals. Management refers to how the CBT-animal relationship is managed, whereas perspective involves the various actors’ understanding of the CBT-animal relationship (including the host, that is, CBT members, and tourists as guests—we shall call this the human perspective). The management aspect includes the interrelationships between training, animal welfare and CBT members’ livelihoods. It can have a decisive influence as it guides matters related to animal welfare and CBT members’ livelihoods in a CBT venture. Animal welfare and community livelihoods should be regarded as of equal importance. The human perspective of CBT-animal relationships is concerned with how the animals are viewed by the hosts and tourists alike. It is for this reason that Figure 1 connects the human perspective aspect with the aspects related to the role of animals. While a tourist could, as is often the case, perceive a horse ride as an attraction, the CBT host is more likely to see the horse as a working asset. Different types of relationships can emanate from the CBT-animal interaction. Four main relationships are proposed: animals directly involved with tourists such a horse or donkey “employed” to carry tourists on a ride; animals indirectly involved with tourists (such as an animal carrying wood for fire for tourists), and the consumptive aspect (for example, hunting) and non-consumptive use of animals in CBT (such as whale watching). These types of relationships are linked to the roles and activities of animals in CBT, such as attraction, working animals and so on. For instance, a horse trek can be seen as a non-consumptive aspect in terms of the type of relationship and as an attraction from a tourist perspective under roles of animals; or it can be understood as working assistance from the CBT host’s perspective. This framework is a panoply of possibilities that herald the possible CBT-animal relations that can promote community development and the care and conservation of animals without threatening their existence. There are some multiplier effects in the relationship. Animals can be an attraction on their own; they could be used for traction—carrying goods, tourists, towing; and they can be game (meat) for tourists. In the process, jobs and income are created in the value chains.

In all these circumstances, we emphasise the need to uphold animal rights that is not negotiable. We posit that the CBT-animal relationship has a number of effects, namely, consumptive and non-consumptive effects, attraction effects, job creation effects, capacity building effects, and animal rights and welfare effects as well as community development effects. This article acknowledges that the CBT-animal relationship is a contested one as the human perspective aspect may fail to consider the voice of advocacy groups who represent animal welfare matters. As such, the CBT-animal relationship will be lopsided towards the needs of humans with little regard for animal welfare. Furthermore, animal welfare experts should be consulted with regard to any forms of training and capacity building, so that management is not rendered inefficient. Ideally, such training and capacity building should incorporate ideas from community-based research which is associated with the scholarship of adult and continuing education. This suggestion is made based on the premise that the handlers of horses are usually working adults in a rural context who may or may not have exposure to diverse knowledges related to animal welfare. It does not intend to belittle what they already know.

5. Conclusion
Relationships between tourism and animals are common. As a specific form of tourism, CBT can utilise various forms of interaction with animals for the benefit of communities while preserving and caring for animals. This article proposed a relationship framework that shows the interconnections and relationships that could exist between animals and tourism in a CBT context. It noted that animals contribute to tourism in multiple ways, including acting as a means of transportation for CBT owners, as cuisine (game meat), enabling watching (for example, bird watching, whale watching), and horse trails, and creating jobs (for horse and donkey guides). Animals are a popular tourist attraction and an important feature of sustainable CBT. The article also noted that CBT is a tool for community development, which promotes empowerment of local communities and conservation of the environment in which animals reside. Animals form an essential part of the experience for both the tourist and host. This implies that protection of the environment and benefits from tourism should not take place at the expense of animal welfare. It also means that it
is imperative to train personnel who work with animals. The article showed that CBT has vast potential to accord tourists the rare opportunity of homestays accompanied by proximal interaction with the hosts, animals, and the environment/nature.

The general CBT-animal relationship framework proposed offers a platform for further research and understanding of this phenomenon. The article thus contributes to the literature on relationships between tourism and animals and, more specifically, on CBT. In this sense, it modestly attempted to “open” up a new stream of research on the relationships between CBT and animals within the general CBT literature.

The framework is based on four main aspects, namely, management, human perspective, type of relationship, and the role of animals. Management and human perspective are directed towards CBT-animal relationships whereas the type of relationship and role of animals are viewed as an outcome of the relationship. Management is a fundamental “precondition” for a CBT-animal relationship that can positively contribute to CBT development, CBT owners’ livelihoods and, very importantly, animal welfare. In addition, the different aspects are linked to each other. For example, the human perspective is linked to the role of animals. Community-based tourism has its own specific characteristics that are specifically directed towards social justice involving disadvantaged groups in society. It is, therefore, acknowledged that there is a need for further research on the relationship between CBT and animals. This could include an investigation of how specific characteristics of CBT can interact with animals for the navigation of new productive vistas in that relationship.

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Author details
Andrea Giampiccoli
E-mail: andrea.giampiccoli@gmail.com
Dr. Oliver Mtapur
E-mail: mtapurio@ukzn.ac.za
Sean Jumah
E-mail: seanj@dut.ac.za
1 Hospitality and Tourism Department (Ritson Campus), Durban University of Technology, P. O. Box 1334, Durban, 4000, South Africa.
2 College of Humanities, Howard College, University of KwaZulu Natal, School of Built Environment and Development Studies, Private Bag X54003, Durban, 4000, South Africa.
3 Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology, M.L. Sultan Campus, P.O. Box 1334, Durban, 4000, South Africa.

Author statement
Our work is concerned with research into tourism broadly, however, with a specific focus on community-based tourism (CBT). We look at several aspects of CBT to inform both policy and practice using theoretical and empirical research. Our theoretical models focus on innovations in strategies, tactics, and frameworks that leverage CBT principles and characteristics, in order to suggest policies that alleviate poverty, reduce inequalities and bring about self-determination, self-reliance and social justice within local communities in tourism and in the world. Our work is undergirded by principles of equity and sustainability for a just tourism. In other words, we support tourism that is local community-centered, and sustainable. Within this broad framework, this article looks at the delicate relationship between CBT and animals.

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Note
1. ABTA is the UK’s largest travel association, representing travel agents and tour operators that sell £32 billion worth of holidays and other travel arrangements each year.

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