

Community Empowerment through Ecotourism Development of Bukit Tawap Tourism Village Sumenep Regency as a Sustainable Destination

Widyawati^{1*}, Agus Sukristyanto², IGN. Anom Maruta³

Universitas Dr. Soetomo

Corresponding Author: Widyawati rendsata@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keyword: Community Empowerment, Ecotourism, Tourism Village Development

Received : 25, April

Revised : 27, May

Accepted: 29, June

©2025 Widyawati, Sukristyanto, Maruta: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRAK

This study explores the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism as an innovative approach to developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. Key problems include low community participation, poor environmental conservation, and limited stakeholder collaboration. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach using Scheyvens' (2018) empowerment theory, covering economic, psychological, social, and political dimensions. Data were collected through interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Findings show that ecotourism has enhanced income, self-confidence, social cohesion, and political participation. However, challenges remain, such as unequal distribution of economic benefits, low community motivation, and limited access to information. The study recommends increasing inclusivity of economic benefits, community training, and transparent resource management. By addressing these challenges, Bukit Tawap Tourism Village has the potential to become a sustainable, innovative, and inclusive model for rural tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the key sectors in global economic development, including in Indonesia. In recent decades, the concept of ecotourism has emerged as a promising alternative to combine economic growth with environmental conservation and local community empowerment (Honey, 2008). Ecotourism not only offers unique travel experiences but also encourages active community participation in the management of tourism destinations, thus creating sustainable economic benefits (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). In Indonesia, ecotourism-based tourism villages have started to develop as an effort to utilize natural and cultural potentials while improving the welfare of rural communities (Rahmayani, D., 2022).

The development of ecotourism-based tourism villages in Indonesia, including Bukit Tawap Tourism Village, faces three main challenges. First, there is low community participation in managing tourism destinations. Community participation is key to the success of ecotourism, yet many villagers lack the capacity and awareness to be actively involved. Second, there is insufficient environmental preservation in tourism activities. Poorly managed ecotourism can lead to environmental degradation, such as ecosystem damage and pollution. Third, there is limited collaboration among stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and local communities. Therefore, an innovative approach is needed that integrates community empowerment and ecotourism concepts to ensure sustainable tourism village development.

This study aims to explore how the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts can serve as an innovative approach in developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. Focusing on community empowerment, environmental preservation, and sustainability, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically in the fields of public administration, tourism, and sustainable development. Common solutions proposed to address these challenges include enhancing community capacity through training, strengthening local institutions, and applying sustainability principles in destination management (Honey, 2008). However, these solutions are often partial and unintegrated, thus lacking effectiveness in creating sustainable impact. Therefore, a more holistic and innovative approach is needed, such as the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts.

Based on previous literature, several specific solutions have been proposed to address challenges in developing ecotourism-based tourism villages. First, increasing community participation can be achieved through the establishment of working groups or traditional institutions responsible for managing tourism destinations (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). Second, environmental preservation can be enhanced through the implementation of sustainable practices, such as waste management, renewable energy use, and educating tourists on the importance of environmental conservation (Honey, 2008). Third, multi-stakeholder collaboration can be strengthened through the formation of forums or platforms involving the government, private sector, NGOs, and local communities (Scheyvens, 1999).

However, these solutions are often not optimally implemented in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas like Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. Therefore, this study proposes an innovative approach that integrates community empowerment and ecotourism concepts. This approach is expected to create synergy between increasing community capacity, environmental preservation, and strengthening stakeholder collaboration. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts in the development of Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. Focusing on community empowerment, environmental preservation, and sustainability, this research is expected to provide new contributions to the academic literature and the practice of tourism village development.

The objective of this study is to examine how the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts can serve as an innovative approach in developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination. The study has three main novelties. First, the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts as an innovative approach in tourism village development. Second, the focus on Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a specific case study, providing a unique local perspective that has not been widely explored in the literature. Third, the emphasis on sustainability as the main goal, combining economic, social, and environmental aspects in tourism development. The scope of the study includes the location in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village, Sumenep Regency, with research subjects consisting of local communities, local government, and other stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theory of Sustainable Development, popularized by the Brundtland Report (1987), emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This theory is based on three main pillars: economic, social, and environmental (United Nations, 2015). In the context of this research, this theory serves as a foundational framework because the development of Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination must consider the balance between increasing community income (economic), preserving local culture (social), and protecting the environment. For example, ecotourism activities should be designed to enhance community income through homestays and local product sales while ensuring the conservation of nature and local culture.

The Theory of Community Empowerment, developed by Rappaport (1987) and expanded by Zimmerman (2000), emphasizes the importance of enhancing the capacity, participation, and independence of communities in the development process (Zimmerman, 2000). This theory highlights that empowerment is not just about providing resources but also about building the community's ability to control those resources. In the context of this research, community empowerment in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village can be achieved through ecotourism management training, the establishment of local institutions, and increased participation in decision-making. This will ensure that the

community plays an active role in managing the tourism destination, allowing the benefits of ecotourism to be equitably distributed.

The Theory of Ecotourism, developed by Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) and expanded by Fennell (2020), focuses on environmentally responsible tourism that emphasizes nature conservation and local community empowerment (Fennell, 2020). This theory stresses the importance of sustainability principles in managing tourism destinations. In the context of this research, ecotourism in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village should be designed to minimize negative environmental impacts, such as by developing eco-friendly trekking paths and using renewable energy in homestays. Additionally, local communities should be actively involved in managing ecotourism so they can gain direct economic benefits from tourism activities.

The community empowerment theory developed by Scheyvens (2016) in her book "Tourism and Poverty" and updated in her 2018 article "Linking Tourism to Poverty Reduction and Sustainability: A Review of Key Themes" emphasizes four dimensions of empowerment in the context of community-based tourism: economic, psychological, social, and political (Scheyvens, 2018).

1. Economic Empowerment includes increasing community income, creating local jobs, and equitable distribution of economic benefits.
2. Psychological Empowerment involves boosting self-confidence, pride in local culture, and community motivation to engage in tourism management.
3. Social Empowerment refers to strengthening social cohesion, preserving local culture, and active participation of vulnerable groups such as women and youth.
4. Political Empowerment involves community participation in decision-making, representation in tourism management institutions, and access to resources and information.

This theory is relevant to the research as it provides a comprehensive analytical framework for evaluating community empowerment in the context of ecotourism. By using these four dimensions, it is possible to identify the extent to which ecotourism in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village contributes to enhancing the economic, psychological, social, and political well-being of the community while ensuring the sustainability of ecotourism programs from a local perspective.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on Bukit Tawap Tourism Village, which has not been extensively studied before, as well as the integration of community empowerment and sustainability-based ecotourism. Based on studies such as Wihartanti et al. (2020) on Kare Village and Septemuryantoro (2020) on Candirejo Village, the success of ecotourism heavily depends on community participation and stakeholder collaboration. However, this research offers a more innovative approach by integrating the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental.

Studies by Yyardani et al. (2021) and Irandu & Shah (2014) highlight the importance of community mentoring and empowerment in ecotourism management. This research adopts a similar approach but with innovations in implementing the Pentahelix model, which involves collaboration between government, private sector, academia, community, and media to ensure sustainability.

Findings by Wiyono et al. (2023) on economic and social empowerment through ecotourism in Seloliman Village also support the argument that community empowerment can enhance economic well-being while preserving the environment. Thus, this research not only enriches the literature on ecotourism and community empowerment but also provides practical recommendations for sustainable tourism village development in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts with a specific focus on Bukit Tawap Tourism Village and the application of the Pentahelix model to achieve sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply explore the phenomenon of community empowerment through ecotourism in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. The case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand the local context holistically and in detail (Yin, 2018). The research informants consist of three main groups: (1) policymakers, (2) policy implementers, including tourism village managers and community leaders, and (3) policy impact recipients, namely local community members involved in ecotourism activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews to explore informants' perceptions, experiences, and expectations (Kvale, 2007); participatory observation to observe ecotourism activities and the interaction between the community, the environment, and tourists (Spradley, 2016); and documentation to gather policy documents, activity reports, and secondary data related to the development of the tourism village (Bowen, 2009). The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying key themes such as community participation, capacity building, and environmental conservation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Triangulation was used to ensure data validity by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents (Denzin, 2017).

Data validity was maintained through four criteria: (1) credibility, by using source and method triangulation as well as member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); (2) transferability, by providing a detailed description of the research context (Shenton, 2004); (3) dependability, by documenting the research process in detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); and (4) confirmability, by ensuring that findings are based on verified data and free from researcher bias (Shenton, 2004). This method is designed to produce comprehensive and reliable findings related to community empowerment through ecotourism in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research question of this study is : How can the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism become an innovative approach in developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination ? This study utilizes the Community Empowerment Theory developed by Scheyvens (2018), which includes four dimensions of empowerment: economic, psychological, social, and political. This theory is combined with data obtained from three groups of informants: policymakers, policy implementers, and policy impact recipients.

Economic Empowerment

1. Based on interviews with policy impact recipients (local community), ecotourism in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village has positively impacted the increase in community income. Community members involved in ecotourism activities, such as homestay owners, tour guides, and local product sellers, reported significant income growth. For example, homestay owners have been able to increase their monthly income by 30-40% since the tourism village was developed.
2. However, according to policy implementers (tourism village managers), the distribution of economic benefits is not yet equitable. Some community groups, especially those living on the village outskirts, still struggle to access economic opportunities from ecotourism. This indicates the need for more inclusive strategies to ensure that all community layers can enjoy the economic benefits of ecotourism.

Psychological Empowerment

1. Interviews with policy impact recipients revealed that ecotourism has increased the community's self-confidence and pride in their local culture and environment. The community feels more valued as their culture and nature become the main attractions for tourists. For instance, a tour guide stated, "I am proud to showcase our natural beauty and culture to tourists."
2. However, policymakers (government officials) noted that there are still challenges in motivating the community to actively engage in ecotourism management. Some community members remain hesitant due to a lack of understanding of the long-term benefits of ecotourism. Therefore, more intensive education and training programs are needed to enhance community motivation.

Social Empowerment

1. Based on observations and interviews with policy implementers, ecotourism has strengthened social cohesion in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. The community collaborates in managing the tourism destination, such as cleaning the environment and organizing cultural events. Additionally, active participation from vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, has increased. For example, women's groups are involved in selling local products, while youth are active as tour guides.

2. However, policy impact recipients expressed that there is still unequal participation among community groups. Some groups, such as the elderly, feel less involved in ecotourism activities. This highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to ensure that all community groups can participate.

Political Empowerment

1. According to policymakers, community participation in decision-making has increased since the tourism village was developed. The community is involved in planning and evaluating ecotourism programs through village deliberation forums. Additionally, the community also has representation in tourism management institutions, such as Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group).
2. However, policy impact recipients revealed that access to resources and information is still limited. Some community members feel that information about ecotourism programs is not evenly distributed. Therefore, better transparency is needed in managing information and resources.

Integration of Community Empowerment and Ecotourism

Based on the findings above, the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism can serve as an innovative approach in developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination. Here is the analysis of this integration:

1. Economic Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has increased community income through activities such as homestays, tour guiding, and local product sales.
 - b. However, strategies are needed to ensure a more equitable distribution of economic benefits, such as involving community groups living on the village outskirts.
2. Psychological Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has boosted community self-confidence and pride in their local culture and environment.
 - b. However, education and training programs are needed to increase community motivation in managing ecotourism.
3. Social Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has strengthened social cohesion and involved vulnerable groups in tourism activities.
 - b. However, a more inclusive approach is needed to ensure participation from all community groups.
4. Political Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has increased community participation in decision-making and representation in tourism management institutions.
 - b. However, better transparency is needed in managing information and resources.

This study aims to address the research question of how the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism can become an innovative approach in developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination. Using the Community Empowerment Theory developed by Scheyvens (2018), this study analyzes four dimensions of empowerment: economic, psychological, social, and political. Data were obtained from three groups of informants: policymakers, policy implementers, and policy impact recipients. Below is an in-depth discussion based on the research findings Discussion Based on Empowerment Dimensions

1. Economic Empowerment

- a. Based on interviews with policy impact recipients (local community), ecotourism in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village has positively impacted community income. Community members involved in ecotourism activities, such as homestay owners, tour guides, and local product sellers, reported significant income increases. For instance, homestay owners have been able to increase their monthly income by 30-40% since the tourism village was developed. This aligns with Wihartanti et al. (2020), which shows that ecotourism can be an alternative income source for rural communities.
- b. However, according to policy implementers (tourism village managers), the distribution of economic benefits is not yet equitable. Some community groups, especially those living on the village outskirts, still struggle to access economic opportunities from ecotourism. This finding is consistent with Yyardani et al. (2021), which highlights the importance of mentoring and inclusivity in ecotourism development. Therefore, more inclusive strategies are needed, such as training and special mentoring for less involved community groups, to ensure that all levels of society can enjoy the economic benefits of ecotourism.

2. Psychological Empowerment

- a. Interviews with policy impact recipients revealed that ecotourism has increased the community's self-confidence and pride in their local culture and environment. The community feels more valued as their culture and nature become the main attractions for tourists. For instance, a tour guide stated, "I am proud to showcase our natural beauty and culture to tourists." This finding aligns with Irandu & Shah (2014), which shows that ecotourism can enhance community self-esteem and pride in their local identity.

- b. However, policymakers (government officials) noted that there are still challenges in motivating the community to actively engage in ecotourism management. Some community members remain hesitant due to a lack of understanding of the long-term benefits of ecotourism. This indicates the need for more intensive education and training programs to enhance community motivation. Septemuryantoro (2020) also emphasizes the importance of education and socialization to increase community participation in ecotourism management.
3. Social Empowerment
 - a. Based on observations and interviews with policy implementers, ecotourism has strengthened social cohesion in Bukit Tawap Tourism Village. The community collaborates in managing the tourism destination, such as cleaning the environment and organizing cultural events. Additionally, active participation from vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, has increased. For example, women's groups are involved in selling local products, while youth are active as tour guides. This finding aligns with Wiyono et al. (2023), which shows that ecotourism can strengthen social cohesion and involve vulnerable groups in tourism activities.
 - b. However, policy impact recipients expressed that there is still unequal participation among community groups. Some groups, such as the elderly, feel less involved in ecotourism activities. This highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to ensure that all community groups can participate. Scheyvens (2018) also emphasizes the importance of inclusivity in social empowerment to ensure that no group is marginalized.
4. Political Empowerment
 - a. According to policymakers, community participation in decision-making has increased since the tourism village was developed. The community is involved in planning and evaluating ecotourism programs through village deliberation forums. Additionally, the community also has representation in tourism management institutions, such as Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group). This finding aligns with Yyardani et al. (2021), which shows that community participation in decision-making is key to successful ecotourism development.
 - b. However, policy impact recipients revealed that access to resources and information is still limited. Some community members feel that information about ecotourism programs is not evenly distributed. This indicates the need for better transparency in managing information and resources. Irandu & Shah (2014) also emphasize the importance of transparency and accountability in ecotourism management to ensure that benefits are evenly distributed among all community members.

Integration of Community Empowerment and Ecotourism

Based on the findings above, the integration of community empowerment and ecotourism can serve as an innovative approach in developing Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination. Here is the analysis of this integration:

1. Economic Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has increased community income through activities such as homestays, tour guiding, and local product sales.
 - b. However, strategies are needed to ensure a more equitable distribution of economic benefits, such as involving community groups living on the village outskirts.
2. Psychological Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has boosted community self-confidence and pride in their local culture and environment.
 - b. However, education and training programs are needed to increase community motivation in managing ecotourism.
3. Social Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has strengthened social cohesion and involved vulnerable groups in tourism activities.
 - b. However, a more inclusive approach is needed to ensure participation from all community groups.
4. Political Empowerment and Ecotourism:
 - a. Ecotourism has increased community participation in decision-making and representation in tourism management institutions.
 - b. However, better transparency is needed in managing information and resources.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The integration of community empowerment and ecotourism concepts has positively impacted the development of Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination. Ecotourism has increased community income through activities such as homestays, tour guiding, and local product sales. Additionally, the community has experienced an increase in self-confidence and pride in their culture and environment. Social cohesion has strengthened with the active participation of vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, in tourism activities. Community participation in decision-making has also increased, indicating political empowerment.

However, several challenges remain to be addressed. First, the distribution of economic benefits is not yet equitable, particularly for communities on the village outskirts. Second, community motivation to actively engage in ecotourism management is still low due to a lack of understanding of long-term benefits. Third, social participation is not fully inclusive, with some groups, such as the elderly, feeling less involved. Fourth, access to resources and information remains limited, hindering optimal community participation.

By addressing these challenges through inclusive strategies, education, and transparency, Bukit Tawap Tourism Village can become a model of innovative and inclusive sustainable tourism village development, providing economic, social, and environmental benefits to the entire community.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations can be implemented to support the development of Bukit Tawap Tourism Village as a sustainable destination:

1. **Enhancing Inclusivity in Economic Benefit Distribution**

The study identifies that the distribution of economic benefits from ecotourism is not yet equitable, especially for communities living on the village outskirts. Therefore, it is recommended to develop programs that ensure all community layers can enjoy the benefits of ecotourism. For instance, by forming special working groups tasked with identifying less accessible community groups and providing them with specific training and mentoring. Additionally, the government or related institutions can provide business capital or supporting facilities, such as equipment assistance or market access, to help these communities engage in ecotourism activities.

2. **Improving Community Education and Motivation**

The study's findings show that community motivation to actively engage in ecotourism management is still low due to a lack of understanding of long-term benefits. To address this, it is recommended to conduct intensive education and training programs aimed at raising community awareness about the importance of ecotourism for environmental conservation and local cultural preservation. These programs can take the form of workshops, seminars, or training on sustainable ecotourism management. Additionally, involving community leaders as change agents can be an effective strategy to motivate active community participation.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

A longitudinal study on the impact of ecotourism on changes in community environmental behavior, aiming to assess the extent to which conservation and sustainability values are embedded in residents' daily practices following the development of the tourism village.

REFERENCES

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Routledge.
- Honey, M. (2008). *Ecotourism and sustainable development: Who owns paradise?* (2nd ed.). Island Press.

- Irandu, E. M., & Shah, P. (2014). The role of ecotourism in promoting women empowerment and community development: Some reflections from Kenya. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 2(6), 245-259.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. Sage Publications.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Rahmayani, D., Yuliani, R., Kristanti, N. R., Marpaung, G. N., Supriyadi, A., & Nuurfauzi, M. (2022). Peningkatan kapabilitas green economy dalam pengembangan desa wisata sebagai upaya mewujudkan pembangunan berkelanjutan. *Kumawula: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 5(1), 171.
- Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management*, 20(2), 245-249.
- Scheyvens, R. (2018). Linking tourism to poverty reduction and sustainability: A review of key themes. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(7), 1081-1095.
- Septemuryantoro, S. A. (2020). Pengembangan potensi budaya ekowisata melalui pemberdayaan masyarakat Desa Wisata Candirejo Borobudur Jawa Tengah. *Media Wisata*, 18(2), 210-222.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant observation*. Waveland Press.
- Wearing, S., & McDonald, M. (2002). The development of community-based tourism: Re-thinking the relationship between tour operators and development. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(3), 191-206.
- Wihartanti, L. V., Styaningrum, F., & Noegraha, G. C. (2020). Pemberdayaan masyarakat melalui pengembangan produk kopi Kare dan wisata alam berbasis ekowisata di Desa Kare Kecamatan Kare Kabupaten Madiun. *Jurnal Terapan Abdimas*, 5(1), 57-60.
- Wiyono, S. H., Subianto, A., & Nuhman, N. (2023). Pengembangan ekowisata berkelanjutan dan pemberdayaan masyarakat: Studi kasus pusat pendidikan lingkungan hidup di Desa Seloliman, Indonesia. *Masyarakat*, 11(2), 310-328.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Yuardani, A. M., Heriyanto, H., Qadri, U., Rinaldi, H., Wana, D., Tandra, R., ... & Prestoroika, E. (2021). Pemberdayaan masyarakat berbasis pendampingan untuk pengembangan pariwisata pada Desa Sungai Kupah. *Jurnal Abdidas*, 2(2), 176-185.