

Stakeholder Collaboration in the Development of Sustainable Marine Tourism in Wakatobi Regency, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Wakatobi Regency, located in Southeast Sulawesi Province, is one of Indonesia's premier marine tourism destinations, renowned for its remarkable marine biodiversity. Despite its great potential, the development of marine tourism in Wakatobi faces various challenges, including limited infrastructure, a lack of synergy among the government, local communities, and the private sector, as well as threats to environmental sustainability due to unsustainable tourism practices. This research emphasizes the importance of collaboration among stakeholders, including government, local communities, tourism industry players, academics, and non-governmental organizations, to create a sustainable tourism system. Through a Participatory Systemic Inquiry approach, this study identifies supporting and inhibiting factors in collaboration, as well as implications for environmental sustainability and community welfare. The findings indicate that effective collaboration can enhance economic benefits and preserve natural resources, allowing Wakatobi to develop as a leading and sustainable tourism destination.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Marine Tourism, Stakeholder Collaboration, Sustainability, Wakatobi

INTRODUCTION

Wakatobi Regency, located in Southeast Sulawesi Province, is one of Indonesia's leading marine tourism destinations. This area is part of the Coral Triangle [1], [2], known for its extraordinary marine biodiversity. The management of the Coral Triangle involves at least six countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste [3]. As Wakatobi National Park, this region serves as a conservation area that offers ecotourism attractions. Its stunning underwater beauty, adorned with magnificent coral reefs and a variety of marine species, makes it a paradise for divers and ocean enthusiasts [4]–[6]. Additionally, Wakatobi's rich and unique local culture adds a special charm for visitors. The combination of natural wealth and cultural heritage makes Wakatobi a favored destination, attracting not only domestic tourists but also international attention [2], [7]–[12].

Marine tourism in Wakatobi Regency not only offers spectacular underwater beauty but also a variety of exciting activities such as snorkeling, diving, and island hopping. Visitors can enjoy the pristine coral reefs and interact directly with the diverse marine life that inhabits the area. Additionally, the presence of friendly local communities and their unique traditions provides a special attraction for tourists seeking a different experience during their vacation in Wakatobi. With its breathtaking underwater scenery, Wakatobi is a highly sought-after destination for ocean lovers. The snorkeling and diving activities offer unforgettable experiences for visitors, while interactions with the warm and welcoming local people make a holiday in Wakatobi even more special and memorable. All these unforgettable experiences make Wakatobi a must-visit destination for travelers who appreciate the beauty of the underwater world [1], [7], [10], [11], [13], [14].

Despite its significant potential, the development of marine tourism in Wakatobi still faces a number of

substantial challenges. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure [14], a lack of synergy among the government, local communities, and the private sector [1], as well as threats to environmental sustainability due to unsustainable tourism practices [7], [12]. Additionally, local community participation in the tourism industry is not yet optimal, resulting in uneven economic benefits across different segments of society. The concept of building adaptive capacity in tourism development in Wakatobi can be implemented through an approach that integrates top-down and bottom-up planning, involving various stakeholders, including the government, local communities, and non-governmental organizations [4], [5], [8]–[10], [14]. Using the Participatory Systemic Inquiry method, this process includes a series of workshops designed to foster social learning, knowledge exchange, and empowerment among stakeholders, aiming to analyze regional vulnerabilities and formulate appropriate adaptation strategies [15], [16]. By understanding local dynamics and leveraging traditional knowledge alongside external resources, this approach can enhance the adaptive capacity of Wakatobi's communities to face climate change and other challenges, while ensuring tourism sustainability that is sensitive to the local environment and culture.

The importance of education and training related to marine tourism cannot be overlooked [17]–[19]. Local communities need to be equipped with relevant knowledge and skills so they can actively contribute to this industry [20]. Additionally, efforts to protect marine ecosystems and biodiversity must be enhanced to ensure that marine tourism in Wakatobi can be sustained over time [21]–[23]. Close collaboration among various parties, including the government, communities, and tourism industry stakeholders, is essential to address these challenges and maximize existing potential. Through strong collaboration, various tourism development programs can be effectively and sustainably implemented. As a result, the marine tourism potential in Wakatobi can not only be optimally utilized but also positively contribute to the welfare of local communities and the preservation of marine environments, which are valuable assets for future generations. A shared commitment to creating responsible and sustainable tourism will be key to achieving the long-term vision for Wakatobi as a premier marine tourism destination [6], [9], [19], [23]–[26].

In facing these challenges, collaboration among stakeholders is essential for the sustainable management and development of marine tourism [27]. Local governments, community members, tourism industry players, academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all play crucial roles in creating a tourism system that is not only focused on economic growth [21], [28], [29], as seen in Japan and certain regions in Indonesia like West Sumatra and Malang, but also considers social and environmental aspects. Effective collaboration can lead to more inclusive policies, enhance the competitiveness of destinations, and maintain a balance between conservation and the utilization of natural resources [19], [23], [30].

The development of marine tourism in Wakatobi Regency, despite its significant potential, still faces several substantial challenges that hinder sustainability and economic benefits for local communities. One of the main issues is the lack of synergy among the government, communities, and the private sector, resulting in suboptimal community participation in the tourism industry. This leads to uneven economic benefits from tourism, where only a few businesses reap the rewards while many other local communities remain marginalized. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure and unsustainable tourism practices threaten environmental sustainability, diminishing Wakatobi's appeal as a premier tourist destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Collaboration in Tourism Management

Collaboration in tourism development is a joint effort among various parties involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of tourism policies to achieve aligned objectives (Bramwell & Lane, 2000) [31]. In the context of marine tourism, this collaboration includes a range of stakeholders such as the government, local communities, academics, tourism industry players, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Jamal & Getz, 1995) [32]. The Collaborative Governance model proposed by Ansell and Gash (2008) [33] emphasizes the importance of cooperation among stakeholders based on trust, effective communication, and shared goals. Research indicates that optimal collaboration can enhance the effectiveness of tourism

policies, promote innovation within the industry, and maintain a balance between conservation and the utilization of natural resources (Selin & Chavez, 1995) [34]. Therefore, building strong partnerships among all parties is crucial for

achieving sustainable marine tourism development that benefits all involved stakeholders.

The Role of Stakeholders in Marine Tourism Development

According to Byrd (2007) [35], stakeholders in the tourism industry have diverse and complementary roles. The government plays a crucial role in regulation, infrastructure development, and destination promotion. Local communities, as hosts to tourists, contribute by providing services and preserving cultural and environmental integrity [36]. Industry players, such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators, focus on marketing and managing facilities. Academics contribute through research and the development of sustainability strategies, while NGOs and environmental organizations are active in advocacy for conservation and local community empowerment.

Academics can also enhance the capacity of students from Wakatobi using the Reef Survivor concept. This concept is designed to teach students about coral reef ecology, evolution, and extinction. What is particularly interesting is how this game combines competitive and collaborative elements, allowing players to build resilient coral reef ecosystems through mechanisms like mutation, migration, and natural selection. Through interactive gameplay, students not only learn about complex scientific concepts but also actively engage in strategies and discussions with their peers. Evaluation results indicate that many students prefer playing this game over attending traditional labs, and they report an increased understanding of the material being taught [23], [37].

In marine tourism destinations like Wakatobi, the success of management largely depends on the synergy among these stakeholders [38], [39]. Effective and strategic collaboration between the government, local communities, industry players, academics, and NGOs is essential for developing responsible and sustainable tourism. This is crucial for maintaining a balance between the utilization and preservation of natural resources, ensuring that all parties can benefit sustainably from the existing marine tourism [40]. By building solid partnerships, Wakatobi can become a model for marine tourism destinations that are not only attractive but also committed to environmental sustainability and community well-being [16].

Sustainable Tourism and Its Impact on the Environment

The concept of sustainable tourism emphasizes three main pillars: economic, social, and environmental (UNWTO, 2005) [41]. In practice, poorly managed marine tourism can lead to various negative impacts, such as coral reef degradation, marine pollution, and conflicts of interest between environmental conservation and economic exploitation [36]. Therefore, integrating sustainability principles into the management of marine tourism is crucial.

A study by Gössling and Hall (2006) [42], [43] indicates that community-based ecotourism practices can be an effective solution for maintaining a balance between economic growth and nature conservation. By involving local communities in tourism activities, they are empowered not only to be beneficiaries but also to become guardians and stewards of the environment. Empowering local communities in the tourism sector is a key factor in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry (Scheyvens, 1999) [44]. Thus, this inclusive and community-based approach can help create more responsible marine tourism, providing sustainable economic benefits while protecting marine ecosystems for future generations.

Case Study of Stakeholder Collaboration in Sustainable Marine Tourism

The success of marine tourism management heavily relies on synergy among stakeholders, as demonstrated in several case studies. In the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, strict regulations and a community-based approach have effectively preserved the marine ecosystem through collaboration between the government, scientists,

local communities, and tourism industry players (Marshall et al. 2017) [45]. In Raja Ampat, Indonesia, cooperation among the government, conservation NGOs, and indigenous communities has helped maintain marine biodiversity while enhancing the economic well-being of local residents [46], [47], [48].

The discovery of a 19th-century shipwreck at Boot Reef, Australia, by the Australian National Maritime

Museum and the Silentworld Foundation has garnered attention through the use of evidence-based approaches to identify the vessel, focusing not only on the artifacts found but also on the absence of common architectural components on similar ships [49]. This concept can be adapted for tourism development in Wakatobi by involving various stakeholders—local government, communities, scientists, and the private sector—in the planning and management of tourism destinations. However, the implementation of ecotourism in Wakatobi still faces challenges related to private sector involvement and financial sustainability. While collaboration among these parties is crucial for achieving long-term sustainability, these challenges highlight the need for more integrated and inclusive strategies. By strengthening synergy and ensuring active participation from all stakeholders, Wakatobi can overcome existing barriers and develop sustainable marine tourism that benefits the entire community.

Regulations and Policies for Marine Tourism in Indonesia

The Indonesian government has issued various policies related to the development of marine tourism, including Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, which serves as a legal foundation emphasizing the importance of sustainability and community empowerment within the tourism industry. This policy highlights that the growth of the tourism sector must consider environmental preservation and the welfare of local communities. Additionally, the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy 2020-2024 sets targets for strengthening marine tourism destinations focused on conservation and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, aiming to maximize Indonesia's marine tourism potential while maintaining the sustainability of marine resources. The Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Regulation No. 31 of 2014 also plays a crucial role in regulating zoning and protecting marine ecosystems to support responsible and sustainable marine tourism development.

Research Gaps and Contributions of This Study

Although many studies have addressed stakeholder collaboration in tourism development, there remain gaps in understanding several key aspects. First, the effectiveness of cooperation among stakeholders in the context of marine tourism in Wakatobi needs further investigation. Effective collaboration between the government, local communities, and the private sector is crucial for achieving sustainable tourism development goals [50]; however, in-depth research on how to optimize this collaboration in Wakatobi is still limited.

Second, the barriers and drivers of stakeholder collaboration also need to be better understood. Common barriers include differing interests, lack of communication, and resource limitations, while drivers such as trust, shared goals, and administrative support can enhance collaboration effectiveness [51]. Further research is needed to identify specific factors influencing collaboration in Wakatobi.

Third, the implications of collaboration for environmental sustainability and the welfare of local communities are crucial aspects. Effective collaboration can help preserve the environment and enhance community welfare through economic and social empowerment [52]. However, in-depth research is still needed to understand how this collaboration can be effectively implemented in Wakatobi and other regions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative approach [53] using a case study method to deeply examine the dynamics of stakeholder collaboration in marine tourism development in Wakatobi Regency. This approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the interactions among various stakeholders and the factors that influence the effectiveness of such collaboration [54]. The case study involves various data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Through this approach, the research aims to thoroughly explore the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders in the management and development of sustainable marine tourism [55]. The findings are expected to provide significant insights into successful collaboration patterns and identify barriers that need to be addressed to achieve holistic and sustainable tourism development goals.

Location and Subject of Research

This research is conducted in Wakatobi Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, known as one of Indonesia's premier marine tourism destinations and a marine conservation area. The region boasts high marine biodiversity and exceptional marine tourism potential [31]. The subjects of the study include various stakeholders with crucial roles in the management and development of tourism, including local government entities (such as the Tourism Office, Marine and Fisheries Office, and Regional Development Planning Agency) responsible for policy regulation and strategic planning; local communities (fishermen, small and medium enterprises, community leaders, and tourism groups) directly involved in the operations and empowerment of the tourism sector [31]; and industry players (resort managers, tour operators, and marine tourism associations) responsible for providing tourism services and developing destinations. Additionally, academics and researchers focusing on marine tourism and ecotourism contribute through scientific research and policy recommendations, as well as NGOs and conservation organizations actively engaged in environmental protection and community empowerment [16], [36], [56]. This approach provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of stakeholder collaboration, considering the interactions and contributions of each party in achieving sustainable marine tourism.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection in this study was conducted through several comprehensive methods to gain a deep and holistic understanding [57]. First, in-depth interviews were carried out with key stakeholders such as local government officials, community members, tourism industry players, and NGOs to understand each stakeholder's role in marine tourism development, the challenges they face, and the forms of collaboration that have been established. Next, field observations included direct observations of the marine tourism conditions in Wakatobi, focusing on stakeholder interactions and the implementation of policies related to marine tourism management. This allowed the researcher to see dynamics on the ground and identify factors influencing collaboration effectiveness. Document analysis was performed on relevant policies, regulations, government reports, and scientific publications to understand the existing policy framework and its implementation. Finally, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with representatives of stakeholders to obtain a more comprehensive perspective on the effectiveness of collaboration in tourism management, facilitating interactive discussions that could generate new ideas and joint solutions to address existing challenges [34], [53]–[55], [57]–[60].

Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) [59], [61], beginning with coding the data to organize information based on key themes such as forms of collaboration, supporting and inhibiting factors, and their impacts on tourism sustainability. Subsequently, categories were organized based on the roles and contributions of each stakeholder to provide a more structured overview of stakeholder interactions. The process of interpreting the findings involved explaining patterns of cooperation, the challenges faced, and the implications of collaboration for economic, social, and environmental sustainability, enabling the researcher to understand the positive or negative impacts of collaboration on various aspects of tourism sustainability. To enhance data validity, source triangulation was conducted by comparing the results from interviews, observations, and document analyses, as well as member

checking to confirm the analysis results with key informants, ensuring that the data interpretation aligns with the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders.

Research Limitations

This study focuses on the aspect of collaboration in the management of marine tourism in Wakatobi, without directly analyzing economic or ecological impacts in the form of quantitative data. It emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of the dynamics of stakeholder interactions in efforts to achieve sustainable marine tourism. The data used in this research were obtained through in-depth interviews and field observations, which, while providing valuable insights, may be influenced by respondent subjectivity. Therefore, the researcher needs to implement measures such as data source triangulation and member checking to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. This qualitative approach allows the researcher to delve deeper into the factors that support or hinder collaboration, as well as the implications of that collaboration for the sustainability of the tourism sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identifikasi Stakeholders in Marine Tourism Development in Wakatobi

In a collaborative governance approach, identifying the actors and their roles in tourism management in Wakatobi is crucial for understanding the complex dynamics of cooperation among the various parties involved. According to Ansell and Gash (2008) [33], effective collaboration involves the active engagement of all stakeholders, including local government, private institutions, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and tourists. Local government is responsible for formulating policies and regulations that support tourism development, as discussed by Dangi and Petrick (2021) [12], [14], [62], [63], who indicate that inclusive policies can enhance community participation. Private institutions play a role in providing the necessary services and facilities, while local communities are key stakeholders who preserve culture and the environment, offering authentic experiences to tourists (Bichler & Lösch, 2019) [63], [64]. NGOs serve as a bridge between the government and the community, assisting in advocacy and the implementation of sustainability programs, in line with findings by Fanzano (2015) [65], which emphasize the importance of NGOs in strengthening collaboration. Tourists, on the other hand, contribute to the local economy and can influence tourism practices through their choices and behaviors. By understanding the roles of each actor, effective collaboration can be established to achieve shared goals in maintaining tourism sustainability in Wakatobi.

The Wakatobi Regency government warmly welcomes the opening of new tourist attractions, marking their commitment to involving all elements of the community in tourism management. This is evident from the active participation of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), which plays a pivotal role in promoting and managing local tourist destinations. Furthermore, participation in various competitions organized by the Southeast Sulawesi provincial government up to the national level demonstrates Wakatobi's dedication to enhancing its tourism image. The achievements garnered, including nominations in the marine tourism category from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, serve as tangible evidence that Wakatobi has the potential to be a premier destination¹.

In an effort to develop environmentally friendly tourism, the Wakatobi Regency government focuses on the use of traditional fishing gear and safe maritime transportation methods. This approach not only protects marine ecosystems but also supports the sustainability of local resources. It is anticipated that Wakatobi's tourism can provide significant economic benefits to the community while preserving environmental integrity. Research indicates that collaboration among the government, local communities, and the private sector is crucial in creating sustainable tourist destinations (Bichler & Lösch, 2019; Dangi & Petrick, 2021).

In 2013, we established the Fishermen's Museum with the support of PT. IMIP, a unique initiative given the rarity of museums in villages. The establishment of this museum was motivated by the fact that the majority of the community in Wakatobi relies on the fishing sector for their livelihoods. The Fishermen's Museum not

only showcases the history and culture of local fishermen but also provides various eco-friendly fishing gear. Its aim is to encourage fishermen to adopt more sustainable fishing methods that can help preserve marine resources. The partnership with PT. IMIP is part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, aligning with the vision for environmentally-based tourism development in Wakatobi that empowers the community. Through this collaboration, we hope to raise greater awareness about the importance of environmental conservation and sustainability in fishing practices. This initiative is expected to make the museum a center for education and inspiration for the community, fostering responsible and sustainable tourism development in Wakatobiⁱⁱ.

The Wakatobi Regency government actively involves the community in the development of the tourism sector, recognizing the importance of local participation in achieving sustainability and economic benefits. One initiative implemented is a community empowerment program focused on strengthening the local economy. This program includes the collection and marketing of handicrafts produced by local residents. Through the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and Regional Public Companies (PERUSDA), these local products gain access to broader markets, thereby increasing community income. With this strategy, the government not only promotes economic growth but also preserves local culture and traditional skills. This aligns with research indicating that collaboration between the government and communities can lead to significant positive impacts on sustainable tourism development [5], [16], [31].

With the growth of the tourism sector in Wakatobi, the government is committed to empowering the local community through various initiatives. One example is the hiring of local workers for tourism management, along with the implementation of training programs for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These training sessions are conducted in groups and cover a range of skills, from homestay management to local product marketing. This initiative demonstrates that the community is not only involved but also empowered in the tourism development process, particularly for those managing homestays. Through this program, it is expected that the local economy will experience significant growth alongside the increasing number of visiting tourists. Moreover, this empowerment also contributes to the preservation of local culture and the strengthening of community identity, all of which are essential for the sustainability of tourism in Wakatobi [16], [36], [39], [44].

Every member of the Wakatobi community is encouraged to actively contribute to the development and maintenance of tourist attractions, with a focus on environmental sustainability and natural resource conservation. This includes efforts to protect marine mammals, avoid littering, prevent environmental pollution through pesticide use, and refrain from using prohibited fishing gear. As part of this initiative, the government has launched training programs aimed at empowering the communities around tourist sites. One such training involves utilizing seashells as raw materials for handicrafts, such as sandals and bags. This program not only enhances the skills of the community but also creates new sustainable economic opportunitiesⁱⁱⁱ. Consequently, the community plays a dual role as both environmental protectors and drivers of the local economy, focused on promoting sustainable tourism in Wakatobi [5], [16], [31].

Forms of Collaboration that occur

It is no surprise that Wakatobi Tourism has received various awards, including the Indonesian Village Tourism Award (ADWI) from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. This achievement reflects a strong collaborative process among the government, the community, and local business actors. Several factors contribute to the positive impact of Wakatobi Tourism. One such factor is the feedback from Wa Dani^{iv}, a local MSME operator, who stated, "The existence of Wakatobi Tourism has significantly impacted the growth of local MSMEs, especially in marketing home-based products like fish crackers and fish floss. These products can now be sold to visiting tourists." This sentiment is echoed by La Kari^v, a local fisherman, who added, "Making Wakatobi a tourist destination has had a significant impact on the community, especially for fishermen. In addition to fishing, our boat services are also utilized by visitors to explore the sunset and enjoy the evening beauty." Thus, Wakatobi Tourism not only boosts community income but also enhances their involvement in sustainable tourism development.

Table 1 presents a summary of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), indicating that the implementation of tourism policies in Southeast Sulawesi Province requires strong synergy among various entities, including academia, the tourism industry, communities, and the government. This synergy is reflected in policies that encompass destination development, institutional frameworks, marketing, and creative economics. By involving all parties, the success of tourism management can be better assured, particularly in the context of island-based communities that are the primary resources for tourism in the region.

The geo-strategy for tourism has the potential to significantly benefit regional development in the Southeast Sulawesi archipelago. Improved transportation infrastructure and better air connectivity are expected to enhance accessibility for tourists. Given the substantial investment needed for air transport, local government subsidies are a crucial step to ensure that airfare remains affordable for domestic travelers. The "Let's Travel" policy, which encourages civil servants to engage in tourism activities, is also an interesting innovation. This policy not only supports the management of tourist attractions but also provides economic stimulation for local communities.

In this regard, managing destinations that involve the community through the concept of Community-Based

Tourism is essential. This approach emphasizes the significance of economic, social, cultural, and environmental development for local communities. Finally, to address challenges in the tourism sector, the development of formal educational institutions at the higher education level, such as Tourism Study Programs or Tourism Faculties, is necessary. This aims to produce competent human resources in the tourism field and contribute to strategic tourism planning in Southeast Sulawesi Province. With these measures, it is hoped that tourism in the region can develop sustainably and provide broad benefits for the community.

Table 1. Description of Stakeholder Collaboration in the Development of Sustainable Marine Tourism in Wakatobi Regency

No	Stakeholders	Role Details	Participant
1	Local Government	The government plays a role in formulating strategic policies and providing infrastructure that supports the development of marine tourism. They are also responsible for promoting and organizing events to attract tourists.	The Regent of Wakatobi, the Head of the Tourism Office, and the Head of the Fisheries and Marine Affairs Office.
2	Tourism Industry	Industry players, such as tour operators and accommodation providers, contribute by creating attractive tour packages. They collaborate with the government in promoting destinations and offering high-quality tourism experiences.	The Director of E.O. Teramedia, the Owner of the Travel Agency Jelajah Sultra, and the Manager of the ARC Travel Agency.

3	Local Community	Community participation is vital in the management of sustainable tourism. The community is involved in the preservation of culture and the environment, as well as in providing services such as homestays and tour guiding. Their involvement ensures that the economic benefits of tourism are directly experienced by the community.	The Chairman of PHRI/GIPI, the Chairman of the DPD ASITA Sultra, the Secretary of the Creative Economy Committee of Sultra, the Chairman of HPI Sultra, the Indonesian Cyber Media Union in Sultra, the Chairman of the Indonesian Photography Professionals Association, the Masalili Creative Economy Practitioner, and the Chairman of the Kendari Culinary Community.
4	Akademiks	Educational institutions, such as universities, play a role in research and the development of training programs to enhance human resource capacity in the tourism sector. They also provide input in strategic planning based on studies and analyses conducted.	Southeast Sulawesi University and Halu Oleo University
5	Media	The media serves as an information bridge, helping to promote tourist destinations and raise awareness about the importance of environmental and cultural preservation. They can also provide constructive feedback on the programs being implemented.	The Chairman of PWI Sultra, the Director of Harian Rakyat Sultra, and the Marketing Director of Harian Kendari Pos.

Source: Summarized from the notes of the Focus Group Discussion held by the Anugerah Bangsa Berwisata di Indonesia (ABBWI) on September 27-29, 2023, involving reviewer Arief Faizal Rahman from Trisakti Institute of Tourism and Mukti Ali as a facilitator from the Kemenko Marves Team. The FGD was attended by 18 participants from various stakeholders [66].

Community participation in the management of sustainable tourism

Community participation in the decision-making process is an essential element for developing sustainable tourism. Involving local communities not only strengthens the legitimacy of policies but also ensures that their interests are represented in tourism planning. This participation can take various forms, such as discussion forums, public consultations, and direct involvement in policy-level decision-making. One member of the Wa Rani local community expressed, 'We want to be involved in every decision regarding tourism in our area, as we are the ones who best understand its impact on our daily lives'^{vi}. This statement emphasizes that the community does not want to be merely an object of tourism policies but wishes to play an active role as subjects who determine the direction of tourism development.

Moreover, community participation serves as a mechanism for social control over the policies being implemented. When communities are given the space to voice their aspirations, transparency and accountability in tourism management can be maintained. A local leader, La Ode K, emphasized in an interview, 'If policies are made without listening to our voices, there is a high likelihood of conflict or rejection from the community'^{vii}. This highlights the importance of active involvement from local communities in the planning and management of tourist destinations to achieve a balance between economic, social, and environmental interests. Therefore, collaboration among the government, tourism industry stakeholders, and the community must be continuously strengthened to create inclusive and sustainable tourism.

Strategies for waste management and maintaining sustainable marine conservation

The implementation of robust waste management and conservation strategies is a crucial step in preserving the marine environment in Wakatobi. As a region renowned for its marine biodiversity, Wakatobi faces significant challenges in addressing pollution caused by domestic waste and tourism. One initiative underway is a community-based waste management program, which involves local residents in the collection and recycling of plastic waste. An ecotourism manager in Wakatobi stated, 'We have begun to implement an integrated waste management system in the village, such as separating organic and inorganic waste, and encouraging tourists to take their plastic waste back with them'^{viii}. This approach not only reduces marine pollution but also raises tourists' awareness of the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness.

In addition, conservation efforts are being undertaken through coral reef rehabilitation programs and the prohibition of destructive fishing gear. One local fisherman interviewed stated, 'In the past, many used explosives or toxins, but now we realize that it harms the ecosystem. We have switched to environmentally friendly fishing methods and participate in marine patrols'^{ix}. This conservation program is also supported by collaboration among local government, environmental NGOs, and the community in establishing community-based marine conservation areas. For instance, several villages have implemented no-take zones to allow marine ecosystems to recover naturally. These initiatives serve as a model for sustainable practices that not only protect biodiversity but also support the economic well-being of local communities reliant on ecotourism and sustainable fisheries.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the development of marine tourism in Wakatobi Regency has significant potential that has not been fully utilized. Despite collaboration among various stakeholders, challenges such as a lack of synergy, low community participation, and unsustainable tourism practices continue to hinder the success of tourism programs. As a result, the economic benefits generated are uneven, leading to the marginalization of some local communities. Therefore, strategic measures are needed to strengthen collaboration and enhance community involvement in tourism development.

RECOMMENDATION

To enhance the development of marine tourism in Wakatobi Regency, strategic measures are needed, including the establishment of a coordination forum among stakeholders to formulate a shared vision and strategy, as well as implementing community empowerment programs through training in tourism management and local product marketing. Additionally, regulations and oversight must be strengthened by enforcing strict zoning policies to protect conservation areas and ensure environmentally friendly tourism practices. Community-based ecotourism promotion should be encouraged to enable local communities to directly participate in managing natural resources, while sustainable infrastructure development should be undertaken to improve accessibility to tourist destinations. With these measures, it is hoped that Wakatobi's tourism can develop sustainably, provide more equitable economic benefits, and preserve environmental integrity.

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ⁱ An interview with Haliana on September 20, 2022. He was a key informant in the data collection for this research. He is a 49-year-old man currently serving as the Regent of Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, for the term 2021-2024.

ⁱⁱ A semi-structured interview was conducted with La Bighi, a 63-year-old man who serves as the Chairman of the Village Consultative Body in Wakatobi Village. He is also a member of the Wakatobi Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), supported by Mr. La Pendu, a 45-year-old man who is the Chairman of the Wakatobi Pokdarwis. The interview with both individuals took place on September 21, 2021, at the Wakatobi Fishermen's Museum. The interview was conducted in a relaxed atmosphere while enjoying the morning sea breeze and the beautiful green sea panorama, with occasional conversations with fishermen returning from their trips.

ⁱⁱⁱ A semi-structured interview was conducted with Hasanah on September 30, 2022. She is a 36-year-old woman engaged in small and medium-sized enterprises in Wakatobi.

^{iv} A semi-structured interview was conducted with Wa Dani on October 3, 2023. She is a 40-year-old woman who provides shrimp crackers and fish floss made from the abundant fresh fish available in Wakatobi, where the total marine area constitutes 97% of the entire Wakatobi Regency.

^v A semi-structured interview was conducted with La Kari on September 30, 2023. He is 58 years old and has worked as a fisherman since his teenage years up to the present.

^{vi} A semi-structured interview with Wa Rani on October 24, 2023, a 40-year-old woman and fisherman, who interacts with the sea daily, which is set to be developed into a premier tourist destination in the future.

^{vii} An interview with La Ode K (October 24, 2023), a local male fisherman who often feels uneasy because tourism management rarely seeks their opinions.

^{viii} An interview with a 42-year-old man (October 25, 2023), an ecotourism entrepreneur who prefers to remain unnamed.

^{ix} An interview with an NGO activist, Saleh H (name anonymized, October 26, 2023), a 50-year-old man.