



Competitiveness Strategy for Marine Ecotourism Development Through Community Based Tourism Approach Towards Community Economic Resilience

Yohanes Soares

STIE Sulut, Jl. Arie Lasut No. 31, Singkil Satu, Kec. Singkil, Kota Manado, Sulawesi Utara

Email: bonaventurasoares@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Marine ecotourism has great potential in increasing the economic resilience of coastal communities. Through the Community Based Tourism (CBT) approach, competitiveness strategies in developing marine ecotourism can be designed to involve and empower local communities. This research aims to examine these strategies to achieve community economic resilience. The research results show that the development of community-based marine ecotourism can increase income, create jobs and preserve the environment.

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ABSTRAK

Ekowisata bahari memiliki potensi besar dalam meningkatkan ketahanan ekonomi masyarakat pesisir. Melalui pendekatan Community Based Tourism (CBT), strategi peningkatan daya saing dalam pengembangan ekowisata bahari dapat dirancang untuk melibatkan dan memberdayakan masyarakat lokal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi-strategi tersebut guna mewujudkan ketahanan ekonomi masyarakat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan ekowisata bahari berbasis masyarakat dapat meningkatkan pendapatan, menciptakan lapangan kerja, dan melestarikan lingkungan.

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Corresponding Author:

Yohanes Soares
STIE Sulut
E-mail: bonaventurasoares@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Marine ecotourism is a form of tourism that utilizes the beauty and richness of the sea to attract tourists. Indonesia, with the second longest coastline in the world, has great potential in the development of marine ecotourism. However, this development must be carried out sustainably and involve local communities to achieve maximum benefits. The Community Based Tourism (CBT) approach is an effective strategy in this regard.

Marine ecotourism, characterized by its focus on sustainable practices and conservation efforts, plays a vital role in raising environmental awareness and supporting local economies



(Barreto & Tavares, 2017). Defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local communities, marine ecotourism is aligned with principles such as conservation of marine ecosystems, respect for local cultures, and socio-economic benefits to communities. Community-based tourism (CBT) is an essential component of marine ecotourism development, emphasizing the empowerment of local communities in tourism initiatives (Goodwin, 2019). By involving residents in decision-making processes and ensuring that tourism activities provide direct benefits to communities, CBT aims to create a more sustainable and inclusive tourism model (Hiwasaki, 2006).

Community-based tourism approaches recognize the importance of community involvement in the development of ecotourism initiatives, highlighting the need for local communities to have a stake in tourism planning and management (Suansri, 2003). By actively involving residents in identifying tourism priorities, preserving cultural heritage, and managing natural resources, community-based ecotourism can enhance community resilience and economic empowerment (Scheyvens, 1999). This approach not only fosters a sense of ownership and pride among community members but also ensures that tourism development is aligned with local values and aspirations (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Community-based ecotourism serves as a powerful strategy to enhance community economic resilience and sustainable development in marine environments (Ross & Wall, 1999). By empowering local communities to lead tourism planning and implementation, CBT can contribute to diversifying income sources, creating employment opportunities, and fostering entrepreneurship among residents (Zhang et al., 2015). Furthermore, community-based ecotourism models, such as those implemented on Tidung Island, demonstrate that involving communities in tourism development can enhance environmental conservation efforts and improve socio-economic outcomes (Utama & Junaedi, 2020). Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, continued progress of community-based ecotourism initiatives remains critical to the long-term well-being of marine ecosystems and local communities (Kurniawan et al., 2021).

The problem

Although the potential for marine ecotourism is enormous, many coastal areas still face challenges in its development. Some of the problems that often arise include:

1. Lack of local community participation in ecotourism management.
2. Low public understanding of the importance of environmental conservation.
3. Limited access to infrastructure and supporting facilities.
4. The marketing and promotion strategies for marine ecotourism are not yet optimal.

THEORY REVIEW

Community Based Tourism (CBT)

CBT is a tourism approach that places local communities as the main actors in the management and development of tourist destinations. This approach emphasizes community empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental preservation. CBT aims to ensure that



the economic benefits of tourism are felt by local communities and can be used to improve their quality of life.

Economic Resilience

Community economic resilience is the ability of a community to survive and recover from economic shocks, whether caused by internal or external factors. In the context of marine ecotourism, economic resilience can be achieved through diversification of income sources, improvement of community skills and capacities, and sustainable environmental conservation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Community Participation

To improve the competitiveness of marine ecotourism, active participation of local communities is essential. Communities must be involved in every stage of development, from planning to implementation and evaluation. Training and education on ecotourism management and environmental conservation need to be provided to increase community capacity.

Environmental Conservation

The sustainability of marine ecotourism is highly dependent on environmental conservation. Development strategies must prioritize conservation efforts and reduce negative impacts on marine ecosystems. Programs such as marine patrols, mangrove planting, and waste management are important steps in preserving the environment.

Infrastructure and Facilities

The development of infrastructure and supporting facilities such as transportation access, accommodation, and health facilities is very important to support ecotourism activities. The government and private sector need to collaborate to provide adequate infrastructure without damaging the surrounding environment.

Marketing and Promotion

An effective marketing strategy is needed to attract domestic and international tourists. The use of digital technology, social media, and collaboration with travel agents can increase the visibility of marine ecotourism destinations. Promotions that emphasize the uniqueness of local culture and natural beauty will attract tourists who care about the environment.

Developing marine ecotourism competitiveness strategies

One of the key elements in developing a marine ecotourism competitiveness strategy is identifying the unique selling points of the marine environment (Goodwin, 2019). Understanding what makes a destination's marine environment special and attractive to visitors is essential to creating an engaging tourism experience. This can include features such as diverse marine life, pristine coral reefs, unique underwater landscapes, or opportunities for sustainable marine activities such as snorkeling, diving, or wildlife watching. By highlighting these unique aspects, a destination can differentiate itself from competitors and attract



ecotourists seeking authentic, environmentally conscious experiences. Key steps include conducting a thorough assessment of the marine ecosystem, identifying key attractions and points of interest, engaging with local communities to gather insights and perspectives, and emphasizing sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

In line with the community-based tourism approach, the development of sustainable tourism practices is an integral part of the marine ecotourism competitiveness strategy (Suansri, 2003). Sustainable tourism not only ensures the preservation of the marine environment but also contributes to the long-term economic resilience of local communities. By implementing environmentally friendly technologies and practices, such as waste management systems, renewable energy sources, and conservation programs, destinations can minimize their ecological footprint and promote responsible tourism (Hiwasaki, 2006). These strategies include implementing environmentally friendly infrastructure and facilities, establishing guidelines for responsible visitor behavior, engaging in conservation and restoration initiatives, and providing training and education on sustainable tourism practices.

Effectively marketing and promoting marine ecotourism destinations is essential to attracting visitors and improving the economic resilience of communities (Kurniawan et al., 2021). Developing a strong marketing strategy that highlights the unique selling points of the destination, promotes sustainable practices, and engages target audiences can help increase visibility and drive visitor interest. Leveraging digital marketing tools, collaborating with travel agents, participating in ecotourism expos, and partnering with influencers can contribute to raising awareness and positioning the destination as a prime marine ecotourism hotspot (Zhang et al., 2015). Actions include creating engaging and informative promotional materials, leveraging social media and online platforms for marketing campaigns, collaborating with travel bloggers and influencers for exposure, and offering eco-friendly travel packages and experiences.

Improving community economic resilience through marine ecotourism

One of the main strategies to increase the economic resilience of communities through marine ecotourism is to create jobs for local communities (Scheyvens, 1999). Community-based ecotourism has the potential to create jobs and reduce poverty by providing income from tourism activities (Goodwin, 2019). By involving local people in various aspects of ecotourism, such as tour guides, hospitality services, and conservation efforts, communities can gain economic benefits while preserving their natural and cultural heritage (Manyara & Jones, 2007). The development of marine ecotourism can create sustainable livelihoods for community members and contribute to the overall economic well-being of the region (Islam et al., 2018).

Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs is another important component in leveraging marine ecotourism to enhance community economic resilience (Suansri, 2003). By promoting the use of local resources and products in tourism activities, communities can stimulate economic growth and support local business development. Encouraging entrepreneurship within the community, such as offering homestay accommodation, local culinary experiences, or selling handicrafts, can diversify revenue streams and create a stronger local economy. In addition, partnerships between ecotourism operators and local entrepreneurs



can encourage collaboration and mutual benefit, further strengthening community economic resilience.

Investing in community development projects to improve livelihoods is an important aspect of leveraging marine ecotourism as a tool to enhance community economic resilience (Zhang et al., 2015). By allocating resources to infrastructure, education, health care, and other essential services, communities can improve their overall quality of life and create more attractive ecotourism destinations. Sustainable development projects that prioritize community well-being and environmental conservation can attract more visitors, generating revenue that can be reinvested in the community. This cyclical process of investment, growth, and community empowerment can lead to long-term economic resilience and sustainable development in marine ecotourism destinations.

Benefits and Limitations

Benefits : 1. Enhanced Environmental Conservation: Implementing competitive strategies to develop marine ecotourism can lead to better conservation of marine ecosystems and biodiversity by raising awareness and encouraging sustainable practices. 2. Economic Growth and Community Empowerment: By engaging in community-based tourism, local communities can derive economic benefits through job creation, entrepreneurial opportunities, and increased incomes, thereby contributing to their overall resilience and well-being. 3. Cultural Conservation: Encouraging community involvement in marine ecotourism helps preserve traditional knowledge, customs, and cultural heritage, enriching the tourism experience and encouraging cultural exchange.

Limitations : 1. Infrastructure and Resource Constraints: Developing marine ecotourism requires adequate infrastructure, facilities, and resources, which may pose challenges in remote or underdeveloped areas, impacting the tourism experience and community participation. 2. Stakeholder Coordination: Balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders, including local communities, tour operators, government agencies, and conservation organizations, can be complex and may lead to conflicts or delays in the decision-making process.

Solutions : 1. Capacity Building and Training: Providing training programs for local community members on ecotourism management, hospitality services, and environmental conservation can improve their skills and abilities to actively participate in and benefit from tourism activities. 2. Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborating with private sector entities can help address infrastructure gaps and improve service quality, while ensuring that community interests are considered in the development and management of marine ecotourism projects.

CONCLUSION

The development of marine ecotourism through the Community Based Tourism approach can be an effective strategy to improve the economic resilience of coastal communities. Active community participation, environmental conservation, infrastructure development, and effective marketing strategies are the keys to success in developing marine ecotourism. Thus, marine ecotourism not only provides economic benefits, but also maintains the sustainability of local nature and culture, the development of marine ecotourism through a



community-based tourism approach is not only beneficial for the environment but also for the local communities involved. By understanding the principles of marine ecotourism and community-based tourism, identifying unique selling points, practicing sustainable tourism, and marketing destinations effectively, a competitive strategy can be established. This strategy can improve the economic resilience of communities by creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and investing in community development projects. Ultimately, fostering strong partnerships between ecotourism initiatives and local communities is essential for sustainable growth, environmental conservation, and economic prosperity in marine tourism destinations.

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