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COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACHES TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

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Abstract

Rural tourism has emerged as a key driver for sustainable development, particularly when rooted in community participation and local empowerment. This study explores the sustainable development of tourism in Lembanna Village, Bontobahari District with a focus on community empowerment and participatory planning through the lens of Organisational capacity theory, highlighting the influence of systemic, organisational, and individual capacities. Conducted between 2022 and 2023, the research employed a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with 20 informants, including members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), village government officials, tourism stakeholders at the provincial level, and planning consultants. The findings reveal that meaningful community engagement supported using local labour, materials, and culturally responsive design emphasises a significant role in advancing sustainable tourism initiatives. Educational programs that raise awareness of tourism's economic potential have been instrumental in enhancing local support and active involvement. The integration of community knowledge in all stages of development, particularly in the planning and implementation of the Detail Engineering Design (DED), reinforces a bottom-up governance model that aligns with the village's socio-cultural identity and environmental values. This study highlights the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, equitable benefit-sharing, and inclusive policy frameworks to strengthen community resilience and ensure long-term tourism sustainability.

Keywords: Tourist Village, Community Empowerment, Sustainable Tourism, Planning, Lembanna Village

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INTRODUCTION

In Bontobahari District, Indonesia's South Sulawesi, the coastal and marine assets present significant opportunities for tourism growth. However, as emphasised by Azwar et al. (2023) and Rami et al. (2023), the success of tourism initiatives depends largely on the active involvement of local communities. Such participation not only amplifies economic benefits but also enhances social cohesion and strengthens community ownership of tourism initiatives (Joshi & Sadhale, 2022). Lembanna Village, situated in the Bontobahari District, offers a compelling example of spatially driven, community-based tourism development. This study investigates how local participation shapes tourism planning and implementation in Lembanna, emphasising spatial characteristics that promote sustainable outcomes. The village's development model includes collaboration between residents and professional designers, ensuring that infrastructure meets both sustainability and aesthetic standards (Khan et al., 2021; Roxas et al., 2020).

This study adopts an institutional capacity (Hall, 1999) to assess Lembanna's governance capability in tourism and explore how decision-making and resource control shape community involvement which is suggested by Karim and Mandala (2024). Organisational capacity theory offers a useful framework for analysing the multi-level capacities required for sustainable community-based tourism. These capacities operate at the systemic, organisational, and individual levels (Domorenok et al., 2021). In the context of Lembanna Village, this framework enables a deeper understanding of how external policies, institutional structures, and individual competencies collectively shape tourism development outcomes. A core feature of Lembanna's approach is the strategic planning of tourism sites, particularly in less-developed areas, to minimise site competition and improve equitable benefit distribution (Polontalo et al., 2023). This reflects the importance of aligning tourism policies with regional development objectives that preserve cultural and natural assets while promoting economic growth. Leadership by the Village Head and the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*), along with active resident involvement, has improved inclusive tourism governance and strengthened local social capital (Han et al., 2023; Li et al., 2020). These participatory processes align with the South Sulawesi Tourism Office's vision of harmonising economic development with heritage conservation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Planning and Development

Tourism planning plays a significant role in aligning development with the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources while improving inclusive community participation. It acts as a strategic framework that guides tourism growth without compromising environmental integrity or cultural authenticity. According to Tehseen et al. (2024), comprehensive planning enhances visitor

experiences and mitigates adverse effects such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and socio-cultural displacement. Sustainable tourism rests on three equally important pillars: economic development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation (Okrožnik et al., 2024). A failure to integrate these pillars risks short-term gains at the expense of long-term community wellbeing. A systemic and holistic approach to tourism planning must account for long-term impacts on both ecosystems and communities. Community involvement is central to this process, as integrating local knowledge fosters culturally sensitive and socially sustainable outcomes (Tabatabaei et al., 2024). Participatory planning promotes trust, shared ownership, and alignment of stakeholder goals (Zachrisson et al., 2021; Suno Wu et al., 2021). Strategic marketing and place-making rooted in local heritage enhance destination competitiveness and prevent cultural homogenisation (Ruiz-Real et al., 2020; Richards, 2020). Embedding emotional meaning through place-making strengthens authenticity (Singh et al., 2023).

Community Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-based tourism (CBT) is widely recognised as a sustainable and inclusive development strategy, particularly in rural and coastal regions. It promotes local participation throughout tourism processes, including planning, decision-making, and management (Esichaikul & Chansawang, 2022; Paladan, 2020). Active involvement fosters ownership and empowerment, reducing resistance to tourism development while ensuring fairer benefit distribution through employment and income generation (Tjilen et al., 2021; Llopert, 2022; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2023). CBT challenges the extractive tendencies of top-down models, strengthening local economies and amplifying community voices. It allows communities to shape tourism narratives authentically, preserving traditions rather than catering solely to external market demands (Miller & Torres-Delgado, 2023; Sosa, 2022; Zielinski et al., 2021). In places like Lembanna, where culture and ecosystems are central to tourism, CBT fosters pride and deeper visitor engagement (Azwar et al., 2023). Moreover, communities contribute vital ecological knowledge, enhancing environmental stewardship and resilience (Buitrago & Yñiguez, 2021; Pahrudin et al., 2022).

UNDERPINNING THEORY

Organisational Capacity Concept

Organisational capacity offers a valuable framework for examining how institutions and communities design, implement, and sustain strategies such as tourism development (Hall, 1999; Lusthaus et al., 2002). This theory identifies capacity as operating across three interconnected levels: systemic, organisational, and individual (Karim & Mandala, 2024). At the systemic level, broader institutional and policy environments influence the effectiveness of organisations

and communities, encompassing legal frameworks, governance structures, and policy mandates that either facilitate or constrain local initiatives (Blomkamp, 2022). Within tourism, systemic capacity shapes local autonomy, resource distribution, and the degree to which national or regional policies support community-based efforts. Strong systemic capacity ensures a stable, supportive environment through coherent regulations, policy alignment, and institutional support mechanisms (Mirzoev et al., 2022). At the organisational level, capacity relates to the structures, resources, leadership, and governance of organisations such as local tourism groups or village committees (Nurhasanah & Van den Broeck, 2022). This level determines how effectively organisations mobilise resources, coordinate actions, and fulfil strategic goals. The individual level focuses on the skills, knowledge, motivation, and leadership of key actors whose expertise and informal networks shape organisational performance (Schiuma et al., 2024). Collectively, these levels determine the success of sustainable tourism initiatives (Lusthaus et al., 2002).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach to examine community-based coastal tourism development in Lembanna Village, Bontobahari District (See Figure 1). Data was collected from October 2022 to October 2023 through interviews with 20 informants, including *Pokdarwis* members, village officials, provincial tourism stakeholders, and consultants. Field observations and suitability mapping complemented the interviews to identify tourism potential based on Lembanna's natural assets, such as coral reefs and coastal landscapes. Thematic and narrative analyses were conducted using NVivo, guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Mayring (2015), with transcripts verified and translated for accuracy (Loubere, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were ensured through triangulation, expert review, and reflexivity (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

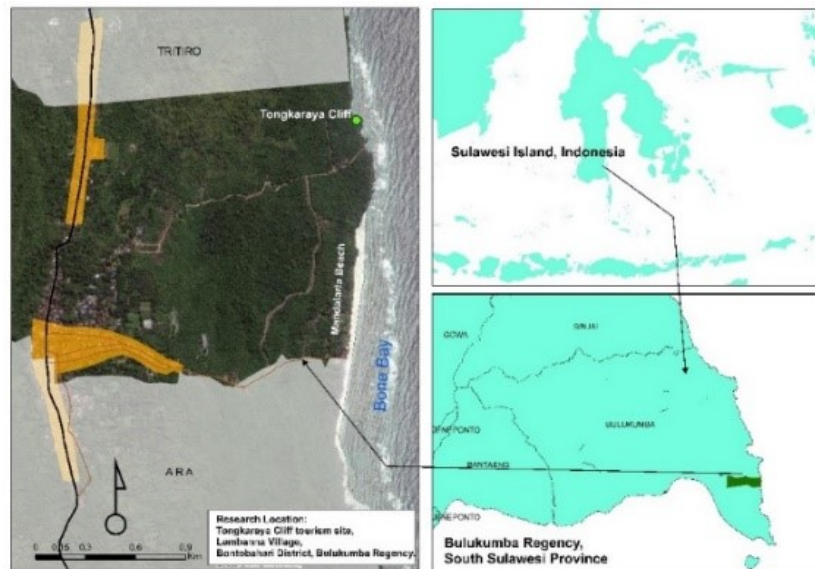


Figure 1: Map of the study area
Sources: Masri Ridwan (2024)

FINDINGS

Community-Led Environmental Governance in Tourism Development

Tourism development in Lembanna Village is driven by collaboration between the village government, *Pokdarwis*, and the community. Village Head *Aspar* and *Pokdarwis* Chairman Abdul Gaffar lead initiatives such as road upgrades and site planning to boost accessibility and highlight tourism potential. The Village Consultative Body (BPD) supports this through land grant documentation. Community engagement in clean-ups, training, and discussions around Detail Engineering Design (DED) will ensure that infrastructure reflects local needs while promoting sustainable tourism and economic development (Azwar et al., 2023).

The findings show that, a communal cleanup, led by the village head and PKK members, targeted areas vulnerable to illegal dumping and emphasised proper waste disposal using designated bins. This reflects more than environmental maintenance, it signifies a cultural shift where sustainability and tourism are seen as shared community responsibilities (Azwar et al., 2023). The consistent application of *Sapta Pesona* values, particularly *kebersihan* (cleanliness) and *ketertiban* (order), has become embedded in everyday practices, enhancing not just a cleaner village but a collective sense of pride and ownership.

These initiatives serve as a grassroots model of environmental governance, driven by collaboration between local authorities and civil society, particularly women's groups. This approach aligns with the principles of CBT,

where resident participation and environmental protection are critical for long-term success (Dangi & Petrick, 2021). By embedding sustainability into daily life, Lembanna not only enhances its appeal to tourists but also strengthens internal community bonds, demonstrating how tourism development can influence civic behaviour and reinforce local identity through inclusive, values-based action. Lembanna Village actively integrates environmental cleanliness into its tourism development through community-driven initiatives aligned program objectives (See Figure 2).

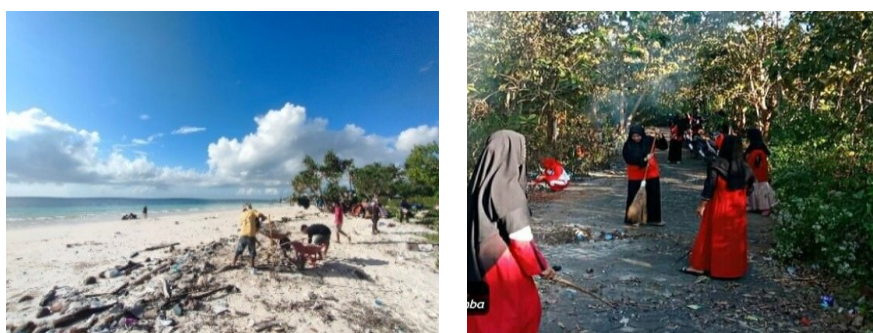


Figure 2: Community Engaging in Environmental Cleanup:
A Collective Effort “*Gotong Royong*”
Source: Masri Ridwan (2024)

Apart from that, P3MD coordination meeting in Lembanna Village has been held, emphasising multi-stakeholder collaboration in community-based tourism which symbolises tourism’s central role in development (as shown in Figure 3). The Village Head, *Pokdarwis*, BPD, and local officials discussed governance, security, and planning alignment. These regular dialogues promote transparency, trust, and shared decision-making. Reflecting participatory governance, such collaboration ensures tourism supports community values while preventing conflict and empowering local actors for sustainable, inclusive development (Astawa et al., 2024).



Figure 3: Community Dialogue on Sustainable Tourism Initiatives at Lembanna Village; Musrenbang Session: Engaging *Pokdarwis* in Village Tourism Development
Source: Pokdarwis Andalan (2024)

On another note, the findings also found participatory mapping process in Lembanna Village, involving residents, village officials, and *Pokdarwis* in defining territorial boundaries for the Grant Certificate (See Figure 4). This inclusive approach ensures transparency, reduces land disputes, and strengthens stakeholder trust. By validating local land rights, it empowers communities and aligns with sustainable land management practices that prioritise local knowledge (Pereira et al., 2021). The process builds spatial clarity, improve sense of ownership, and lays the groundwork for socially cohesive, conflict-free, and sustainable tourism infrastructure development.



Figure 4: Participatory Mapping of Location Boundaries for Determining Planning Areas as the Basis for the Grant Certificate
Source: Masri Ridwan (2023)

During the interview, community members contributed feedback on the design of viewing platforms and beach access, while the local government proposed a food court to support culinary tourism and empower local SMEs. The Detailed Engineering Design (DED) for Tongkaraya Cliff in Lembanna Village, reflecting a participatory approach in sustainable tourism planning. DED includes vital infrastructure such as a multipurpose hall, public restrooms, a pier, beach stairs, and a water tower to enhance visitor comfort. This collaborative planning

process demonstrates how aligning infrastructure with local input fosters a sense of ownership and long-term support. The inclusion of a food court creates economic opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs and promotes place-based development through culinary tourism. As Cvijanović et al. (2025) emphasise tourism development should extend beyond physical attractions to encompass local livelihoods and economic resilience. Hence, the DED ensures that Tongkaraya Cliff is positioned as both a tourist destination and a community-driven economic asset.

Findings also highlight Lembanna Village's participatory governance in tourism, with the Village Head institutionalizing *Pokdarwis* via Decree No. 23b/KPTS/1/2022 to lead grassroots initiatives. Land management, shared with the BPD, includes allocating a 10-hectare site at Tongkaraya Cliff. Inclusive planning through mapping and design which involves village leaders and consultants, ensuring transparency. Community engagement in clean-up and safety reflects the community value which Azwar et al. (2023) agreed that reinforcing a sustainable tourism model grounded in empowerment, collaboration, and cultural ownership.

Community Participation in DED Design: Conditions of Tourist Facility Development in Lembanna Village

The development of tourism facilities in Lembanna Village showcases a participatory and inclusive approach, involving collaboration between the government, private sector, and local community members. The Detail Engineering Design (DED) process integrates community feedback to ensure that planned infrastructure reflects local values and needs, enhancing both functionality and cultural relevance (Pelden et al., 2025; Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). Communities are actively encouraged to contribute ideas, participate in construction, and oversee implementation, enhancing a strong sense of ownership and long-term sustainability. As emphasised by the Chairman of *Pokdarwis*;

“We aim to participate in every stage, and using locally sourced timber will boost our economy”.

This highlights that the project also supports local livelihoods and resource-based microenterprises. This approach not only strengthens community empowerment and economic inclusion but also demonstrates how tourism development can align with grassroots aspirations and sustainable practices. The development of Mandalaria Beach demonstrates a collaborative and community-based approach to sustainable tourism. PT. *Delapan Sepuluh Sebelas*, a consultant recommended by *Pokdarwis* “Andalan,” led the DED process, integrating cultural elements and local needs into the design (see Figure 5). The

use of traditional wood and stone enhances place identity and authenticity, aligning with sustainable practices and reflecting the community's cultural values (Richards, 2020). Around 20 local workers from Lembanna and nearby villages participated in the construction phase, ensuring that economic benefits remain within the community while promoting skills development and social cohesion. Village Head *Aspar* emphasised:

“Community involvement is vital”.

Respondents highlighted the importance of bottom-up development, whereas local input shapes outcomes. This participatory model exemplifies CBT principles, where equitable development is achieved through inclusive governance and grassroots engagement (Agustang et al., 2021; Zachrisson et al., 2021).

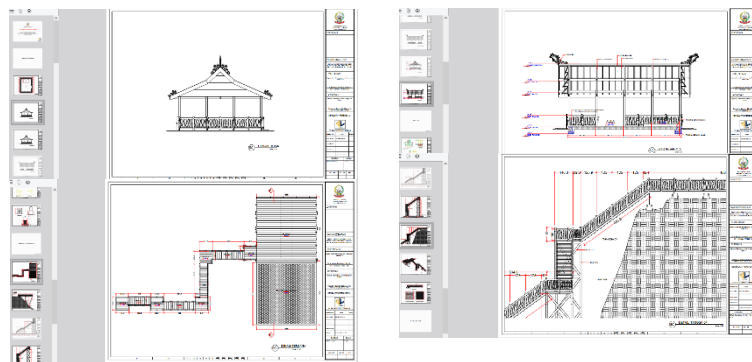


Figure 5: Platform Design through DED Process
Source: Authors' Proposition

Findings also outlines the participatory process in Lembanna Village's tourism facility planning, from identifying needs to maintenance. Community members provide input, select local materials, and collaborate with *Pokdarwis* and consultants to ensure cultural alignment in the DED. They also participate as labourers, instilling ownership and skill-building. During construction, the community helps monitor progress to uphold cultural values. After completion, residents manage facility upkeep, reflecting a sustainable, community-led model of tourism development rooted in local identity and empowerment.

DISCUSSION

Rural tourism plays a significant impact in revitalising communities and driving economic development, particularly when grounded in inclusive participation and local empowerment (Junaid et al., 2023). In this context, Lembanna Village

stands out as a compelling case of how tourism can be strategically developed to serve community interests. Genuine empowerment in tourism extends beyond mere participation; it necessitates institutional mechanisms that safeguard local rights, provide vocational training, and ensure equitable income distribution (Eyisi et al., 2021). In Lembanna, establishing structures that promote community ownership over tourism initiatives is essential to prevent external dependency and ensure sustainability. Oh and Lee (2021) emphasise that such empowerment improves resilience, enabling communities to adapt to external pressures while maintaining socio-cultural integrity. Moreover, sustainable tourism in heritage-rich areas requires strong government oversight to protect cultural resources while encouraging bottom-up development approaches (Hu et al., 2022). This balance ensures that tourism development is both community-led and context-sensitive.

Stakeholder engagement is essential to sustainable tourism in Lembanna, particularly through inclusive governance and local participation. Addressing power imbalances and ensuring fair representation strengthens long-term success (Okonkwo et al., 2023). Empowerment mediates between governance and grassroots participation, shaping support for tourism (Cardoso et al., 2023; Nugroho & Numata, 2020). Strengthening emotional ties to place while reducing perceived tourism costs encourages stewardship. Educational initiatives on rights and tourism's value enhance participation (Rami et al., 2023). Transparent engagement frameworks and policies promoting local culture are key to achieving sustainable, community-based rural tourism (Qu & Zollet, 2023).

The findings reveal that tourism development in Lembanna Village is shaped by local involvement across the systemic, organisational, and individual levels of organisational capacity. At the systemic level, frameworks such as the formal establishment of Pokdarwis reflect the Village Head's authority in directing tourism governance, illustrating how policy environments shape or constrain local autonomy (Asmorowati et al., 2022; Domorenok et al., 2021). Similar trends are noted in ASEAN contexts like Thailand and Indonesia, where village tourism bodies rely on top-down systems (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014). Organisationally, while Pokdarwis mobilises participation, decision-making is centralised within village leadership, mirroring Vietnam's CBT experience (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2021). At the individual level, leaders leverage personal networks, while residents participate in operational roles, reflecting global CBT critiques on elite capture and power asymmetries (Zielinski et al., 2021). Lembanna's case demonstrates how capacity shape community tourism governance. Hence, a conceptual framework is suggested as below:

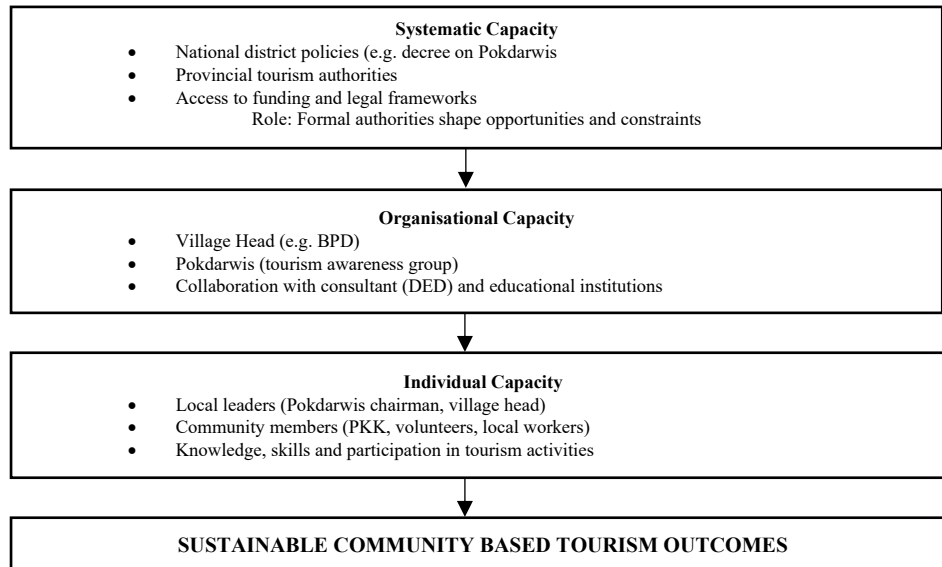


Figure 6: Conceptual Framework of Organisational Capacity Sustainable Community - Based Tourism Development
Source: Authors' Proposition

CONCLUSION

The sustainable tourism development in Lembanna Village depends on strong community empowerment, emphasising local labour, regional materials, and increased awareness. Utilising local resources and workforce ensures that economic benefits remain within the community while improving a sense of ownership and responsibility. Educational initiatives that highlight tourism's economic value and cultural significance are essential to encourage participation and collaboration in planning and implementation. Integrating community knowledge throughout planning, Detail Engineering Design (DED), and oversight stages supports a sustainable tourism framework. Collaboration between local government, stakeholders, and residents through clear communication and targeted training can enhance local capacity in managing tourism sustainably through the lens of organisational capacity and community power. While this study highlights key strategies for inclusive development, it is limited in its exploration of tourist satisfaction and the broader economic impacts on the community. Future research should investigate visitor experiences, community well-being, and economic outcomes. Comparative studies with other rural destinations could offer valuable insights into scalable models of sustainable tourism. Moreover, this study is limited in scope as it does not incorporate the perspectives of visitors regarding satisfaction or expectations, nor does it evaluate

the economic performance of tourism facilities. Future research should employ mixed method approaches to capture tourist perceptions and quantify tourism's economic contributions to local livelihoods.

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