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Building the Future of Tourism: Stakeholder Synergy in the Sustainability Transition in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism development in the transdisciplinary era demands strategies that are not only environmentally friendly but also community-oriented. The sustainability transition has become a key issue in efforts to achieve sustainable development goals, particularly in the context of regional tourism. This study explores stakeholder engagement in the sustainability transition, analyses their perceptions, and designs a collaborative model for the implementation of sustainable tourism. Adopting a qualitative approach based on critical discourse analysis, this research gathers data from policy documents, reports, media articles, and in-depth interviews with local government officials, tourism industry actors, local communities, and NGOs. The findings indicate that the local government has initiated sustainability transition discourse through the revision of the tourism master plan. Although stakeholders exhibit a positive perception of sustainability, significant challenges remain, particularly in rural destinations that receive limited attention. Hence, this study proposes a stakeholder collaboration model that emphasises cross-sectoral synergy as a strategic step towards achieving sustainable tourism in Sikka Regency. This model is expected to enhance community participation, strengthen local capacities, and ensure that tourism development aligns with sustainability principles.

Keyword: **Stakeholder collaboration, sustainability transition, sustainable tourism development, regional tourism**

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism development is inevitably intertwined with the turbulence of global crises. Among these crises, the most pressing threats are climate change and ecological degradation, which will lead to irreversible long-term consequences. Tourism has increasingly prioritised sustainability (UNWTO, 2019; Sawu et al., 2024) and climate change (Scott & Gössling, 2018; Sawu et al., 2024) in its policy objectives. The trajectory of tourism development must be reconsidered, redefined, and reoriented for the future. This paradigm should be implemented across various destinations as a response to global crises and as an effort to achieve sustainable development goals. Tourism should serve as a catalyst for balanced development and even for the restoration of tourism itself.

Sawu et al. (2024) postulate that the sustainable tourism paradigm, which emphasises balance, is insufficient and that a regenerative approach is needed to transform tourism destinations. The accelerating pace of climate change (IPCC, 2018; Sawu, 2024) makes it increasingly difficult for tourism destinations to overlook its impacts or respond passively, despite tourism's significant adaptive capacity (Scott & Becken, 2010; Sawu, 2024). The literature highlights the vulnerability of many destinations (Scott et al., 2019; Sawu, 2024) and the urgent need for anticipatory adaptation planning (Becken, 2017; Sawu, 2024). Therefore, this issue requires serious attention from relevant stakeholders to support the development of tourism.

Tourism development policy serves as a fundamental pillar in shaping the future of tourism growth. Its formulation aims to harness regional potential in achieving sustainable development goals. These policies encompass tourism destinations, the tourism industry, tourism marketing, and tourism institutions. Adapting to social change is essential to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism development. Attention to spatial dynamics, emerging tourism product trends, visitor interests, and tourist mobility is crucial in maintaining the economic resilience of regional tourism. Sawu (2024) highlights the ongoing trend of regenerative tourism practices in this destination. However, these practices have yet to be fully developed. The core issue lies in the limited availability of skilled human resources in the tourism sector and the low level of local community participation.

Tourism development should adhere to the principles of social, ecological, and rational inclusivity. Hassan and Burns (2014) argue that policy formulation requires expert knowledge of globally evolving factors, the availability of local resources, and community participation. Theoretical and thematic issues should be reflected in an effective tourism policy framework. Sawu (2024) highlights that regenerative tourism development

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practices in Sikka Regency have yet to be properly integrated. This is primarily due to the absence of a comprehensive tourism master plan derived from the existing regional tourism master plan.

Based on social records, the readiness of destinations to transition in terms of tourism product development remains minimal, despite the abundance of tourism resources. Currently, tourism product development is concentrated in only a few tourist villages, including Koja Doi, Egon Buluk, Uma Uta, and Kolisia. However, the dominant attractions offered are spatial rather than activity-based experiences. Moreover, other essential components of tourism products remain underdeveloped. The main contributing factors include ineffective destination development policies and programmes, as well as the low mobility of tourist visits to the region. These issues significantly impact the growth of tourism destinations and require a proactive response from stakeholders to address them. Stakeholder participation is key to overcoming these challenges and facilitating the sustainability transition in tourism development.

The key issues in this study revolve around stakeholder complexity, a predominant focus on short-term gains, weak regulation and oversight, and minimal advocacy for sustainable tourism development. These factors significantly influence the growth of tourism destinations, particularly in the sustainability transition process. Addressing these socio-tourism challenges requires a strategic approach aimed at fostering destination development and facilitating the sustainability transition. Tourism should serve as a catalyst for achieving these objectives while also contributing to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The interconnection between tourism management and effective place governance has become increasingly crucial in ensuring better social, cultural, economic, and environmental outcomes (Mata, 2019). The multiplicity of actors within interdisciplinary destination networks necessitates that stakeholders develop flexible and adaptive capabilities to promote collective governance, enabling inclusive decision-making and effective implementation (Koens et al., 2018).

This study focuses on stakeholder mapping analysis, stakeholder perceptions, and stakeholder collaboration models in the sustainability transition. Tourism involves multiple sectors and impacts various stakeholders, including tourists, destination communities, business operators, governments at different levels, public institutions, and non-governmental organisations (Su & Wall, 2011). Previous research indicates a growing academic consensus on the need for a sustainable transition in the tourism system; however, the approaches and instruments for facilitating this transition remain unclear (Tops & Lamers, 2024). A transition is defined as a long-term process in which society

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undergoes fundamental changes (Rotmans et al., 2001). It refers to the dynamic shift of a system's equilibrium from one state to another and also encompasses regime change (Smith et al., 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism must actively involve stakeholders and consider their interests in policymaking, planning, and decision-making (Byrd, 2007; Waligo et al., 2015). The role of power is crucial in fostering stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism development (Cornelisse, 2020). Power should be understood as a reciprocal dynamic among actors, enabling the interests of various stakeholders to be acknowledged and considered in decision-making processes (Wearing et al., 2010). Tourism studies have often highlighted power imbalances between local communities and other stakeholders (Ahmad, 2022; Cornelisse, 2020; Nunkoo, 2017). Empirical evidence suggests that local communities frequently have the least involvement in tourism policy and decision-making processes across various destinations (Farmaki, 2015; Partanen & Sarkki, 2021). Destination stakeholders include those who influence tourism development within a destination, such as governments, destination management organisations, tourism businesses, local residents, tourists, NGOs, and academics (Nguyen et al., 2019b). The role of stakeholders remains a critical focus in sustainable tourism research (Bramwell, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2022). Stakeholder participation varies in intensity, with some exhibiting low participation yet strong support for sustainable tourism, while others demonstrate high participation but weak support (Byrd & Gustke, 2004). Regardless of their level of involvement, stakeholders can express their concerns and contribute to sustainable tourism initiatives (Nguyen et al., 2019a).

Sustainability Transition in Tourism Development

The UN Climate Conference COP 28 reaffirmed the urgency of transitioning away from fossil fuels in the energy system in a just, structured, and equitable manner to achieve net zero by 2050. This transition requires consideration of various conditions, pathways, and approaches (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2023). While COP 28 primarily focused on the role of national governments, the need for such a transition is equally relevant to other economic sectors, including tourism. Sustainability Transitions Research (STR) is a rapidly growing multidisciplinary field that examines the technical, economic, institutional, socio-cultural, and political changes

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necessary to address contemporary challenges such as resource scarcity, air pollution, global warming, and energy poverty (Grin et al., 2011; Köhler et al., 2019; Markard et al., 2012). This paradigm integrates multiple theoretical frameworks, including the Multilevel Perspective (MLP), technological innovation systems, strategic niche management, transition management, and various evolutionary approaches (Köhler et al., 2019; van den Bergh et al., 2011). Sustainability transitions involve a complex, interrelated series of changes engaging multiple stakeholders across various sectors. They are goal-oriented towards sustainability, inherently uncertain, and typically span several decades to materialise (Geels & Schot, 2011; Köhler et al., 2019). The distinctive factors of each location play a crucial role in shaping these transitions, as they influence the different pathways towards sustainability across regions (Murphy & Smith, 2013; Truffer et al., 2015).

Sustainable Tourism Development

Tourism and sustainable development have become major research topics and key concerns for stakeholders in both developed and developing countries (Chan, 2010). The concept of sustainable tourism focuses on achieving balance in the development process (Sawu et al., 2024). Attaining sustainability in the tourism sector is a challenging task, particularly due to the abstract nature of the sustainability concept, which complicates its implementation (Torres & Palomeque, 2014). Sustainable tourism development encompasses economic, political, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions. Economic sustainability emphasises efficiency in development and the controlled management of growth rates (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Timur & Getz, 2009). Politically, sustainability relates to governance structures and the distribution of power within society, considering the increasing role of governments in the management and development of tourism destinations at various levels (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Ruhanen, 2013). Meanwhile, socio-cultural sustainability underscores respect for social identity, social capital, and local cultural heritage, ensuring the preservation of cultural authenticity while fostering social cohesion through active participation and improved quality of life (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Padin, 2012). Environmental sustainability involves the responsible utilisation of natural resources, ensuring that development does not disrupt ecological balance while actively contributing to conservation efforts and biodiversity protection (Padin, 2012; Timur & Getz, 2009).

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RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis (CDA). Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary research movement that examines the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and socio-political or cultural change within society (Fairclough et al., 2011). Wodak and Meyer (2009) define CDA as an approach aimed at critically investigating social inequalities as they are expressed, shaped, legitimised, and perpetuated through language. Data collection was conducted through policy documents, reports, media articles, and tourism promotional materials. The researcher carried out in-depth interviews with local government representatives, tourism industry players, local communities, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The primary themes explored in this study are environmental sustainability and economic sustainability in tourism product development. The researcher contextualised local discourse within the framework of national policies on sustainable tourism transition and identified stakeholder roles as represented in public discourse. This approach enables the study to uncover power dynamics and sustainability practices in the tourism sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Stakeholders in the Transition Towards Sustainability and Tourism Development

Stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping policies and directing the development of sustainable tourism products. Their synergy is essential in ensuring that tourism development aligns with the region's capacity and potential. Stakeholders should adopt a positive stance, as their attitudes and behaviours significantly influence the trajectory of tourism development. This stakeholder approach can be analysed through three key aspects: stakeholder perspectives, stakeholder relationships, and stakeholder participation. These three elements are fundamental in facilitating the transition of regional tourism development towards sustainability. Consequently, the overarching goal of achieving sustainable development can be successfully realised.

The256overnent has actively promoted policy initiatives to advance tourism development, asserting that significant fundamental changes have taken place in the sector. These claims refer to both internal and external transformations over the past decade. From an external perspective, the emergence of Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination has altered travel routes. Meanwhile, on the internal front, regional administrative expansion at the village and sub-district levels, along with the growth of new tourist attractions, has influenced tourism development. Furthermore, the enactment

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of Ministerial Regulation No. 10 of 2016 on Guidelines for the Preparation of Provincial and Regional Tourism Master Plans (Ripparprov/Ripparkab/kota) and the latest spatial and regional planning regulations (RPJMD and RTRW) necessitate that Sikka Regency revisits its Tourism Development Master Plan. As a result, the substantive content of the Regional Tourism Development Plan (Ripparda) must be aligned with these three regulatory frameworks.

> *"Currently, the travel pattern has shifted to Bali–Labuan Bajo–Sikka. This review is also being conducted to foster synergy between sectors and regional government agencies (OPD) to achieve optimal outcomes," said Margaretha Movaldes Da Maga Bapa, S.T., M.Eng., representing the Acting Regent of Sikka, during the Preliminary Seminar on the Review of the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (Ripparda) for Sikka Regency on Wednesday (30/4/2024). (Source: Puspar UGM, 2024).*

The discourse on scientific approaches in the transition of regional tourism development has been actively promoted by academics. The tourism destinations in Sikka Regency are regarded as playing a vital role and occupying a highly strategic location, thereby making a significant contribution to the region's economic and cultural development through the tourism sector. This is due to the area's diverse and prominent potential, which, if optimally developed, could serve as a cornerstone of the local economy. Tourism development is expected to align with sustainable development goals, particularly SDG 08, SDG 13, and SDG 17, by enhancing the competitiveness of tourism destinations. A participatory approach should be fostered in tourism development planning, ensuring that local communities become both the subjects and beneficiaries of tourism, allowing them to directly experience its advantages.

> *Therefore, this seminar also proposes the establishment of a tourism communication forum comprising the six aforementioned elements as an effort to optimise tourism development in Sikka Regency while strengthening synergy and commitment among tourism stakeholders. (Source: Mohamad Yusuf, Expert Team of Puspar UGM, 2024).*

Empirically, the dominance of tourism development has been less favourable to local communities due to the limited emergence of new tourist attractions. The existing attractions are either in their pioneering or developing stages. The pioneering attractions include Egon Tourism Village, Nenbura Tourism Village, and Kolisia Tourism Village, while the developing attractions comprise Koja Doi Tourism Village and Uma Uta Tourism

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Village. Tourist visits remain low, leading to slow growth in local entrepreneurship. Furthermore, socio-economic participation among the local community is still significantly low. A key contributing factor is the limited marketing reach of these pioneering and developing attractions, which has yet to effectively tap into the broader tourism market. Additionally, regional tourism marketing strategies remain insufficient in attracting substantial tourist interest, further impacting visitor mobility within the region.

> *"The local community here is quite enthusiastic about tourism development. However, there are still many obstacles, such as human resources and business capital. Moreover, tourist visits remain low. We do not yet fully understand how to market our products here." (Source: Local Business Practitioner, 2024).*

Social realities indicate that the growth of new tourist attractions remains very limited. This is largely due to the insufficient advocacy for tourism development among local communities. The majority of locals in areas with strong tourism potential have yet to fully grasp the benefits of tourism development. Furthermore, government programmes particularly those initiated by the Sikka Regency Department of Tourism and Culture have not been effectively targeted at the local community. In practice, many tourism facility developments have been wasteful due to a lack of careful planning that positions the local community as key actors in the development process. Efforts to promote new tourist attractions have yet to show significant results in implementation. So far, the push for new attractions has been largely driven by non-governmental organisations, particularly Asidewi Sikka Regency. Among the attractions being developed are Nenbura Tourism Village and Pangabatang Village, which is currently in the process of becoming a designated tourism village.

> *"We are encouraging several areas to become tourism villages, fully involving the local community in the process. So far, we have successfully developed one area into a tourism village, namely Nenbura, while Pangabatang is currently in the process of becoming one." (Source: Chairperson of Asidewi Sikka Regency, 2024).*

Stakeholders' Perceptions in the Transition Towards Sustainability and Tourism Development

The transition towards sustainability in tourism is marked by the growth of local entrepreneurship initiated by the local community. Local entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in enhancing socio-economic participation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (01), (02), (05), (08), and (10). The development of tourism-related

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businesses that leverage local potential is expected to generate both direct and indirect economic benefits for local communities. The process of fostering entrepreneurship requires strong motivation from the local community to realise economic gains through innovative local tourism products. The outlook for opportunities in prospective areas is also a determining factor, particularly when government policies support tourism development as a means of creating a new economic sector within the region. Additionally, the ability of local communities to present tourism products while prioritising conservation initiatives serves as a fundamental element in facilitating the transition towards sustainable tourism development.

The growth of entrepreneurship can be traced through tourism villages as part of the transition towards sustainable tourism development. This entrepreneurial landscape is driven by the local community's motivation to gain economic benefits while aligning with regional tourism policies that highlight local potential. Tourism entrepreneurship develops both at the individual and community levels. Individually managed businesses are run by owners themselves, with some also employing local residents. Meanwhile, community-based enterprises operate under a profit-sharing system. In practice, entrepreneurial development is evident in various sectors, including tourist attractions, food and beverage services, homestays, cafés, and tour packages. However, the prevalence of tourism-related businesses remains relatively low due to both internal and external challenges.

> *"We have developed several small businesses to gain economic benefits, both individually and in groups. However, we still need improvements, as our current progress remains quite basic. We face many challenges in this development process." (Source: Local Business Practitioner, 2024).*

The limited growth of tourism entrepreneurship is influenced by internal environmental factors, including human resources, economic capital, and partnerships. In the tourism sector, adapting to the dynamics of serving visitors differs significantly from other types of businesses. Therefore, human resource development must be tailored to the specific subsectors of tourism-related enterprises. In terms of capital, local communities generally have limited financial resources, necessitating government support to improve access to funding. Additionally, partnerships with external tourism industry stakeholders remain scarce. Strengthening collaboration with external entities is essential, particularly in enhancing marketing strategies for local products. To address these challenges, local communities need diverse empowerment initiatives that enable them to transition from a state of powerlessness to one of strength and self-sufficiency.

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"The community needs training in various tourism subsectors. Adapting to the tourism climate requires time and skilled human resources to provide quality service to visitors. Access to capital must also be supported by the government to empower local communities. Additionally, stakeholder synergy must be established, as collaboration is essential for sustainable development." (Source: Academic, 2024).

The economic implications for local communities remain minimal and highly fluctuating. This is closely linked to external factors, particularly the flow of tourist movement into the region. The limited number of visitors significantly impacts the development of local entrepreneurship. Regional tourism policies and marketing strategies have become critical issues in addressing this challenge. The development of new destinations without proper planning often leads to stagnation. Changes in transportation routes have been a primary factor influencing tourist visits to rural destinations. Even before such changes, visitor numbers were already low and inconsistent. Moreover, marketing strategies have not been well-mapped and remain ineffective in reaching a broader tourism market. Consequently, this hampers the growth of new destinations, particularly the development of rural tourism enterprises.

"The main issue in these rural tourism destinations is market access. In reality, not many tourists are familiar with these new destinations. Additionally, policy changes also impact tourist movement within the region." (Source: Asidewi Sikka Regency, 2024).

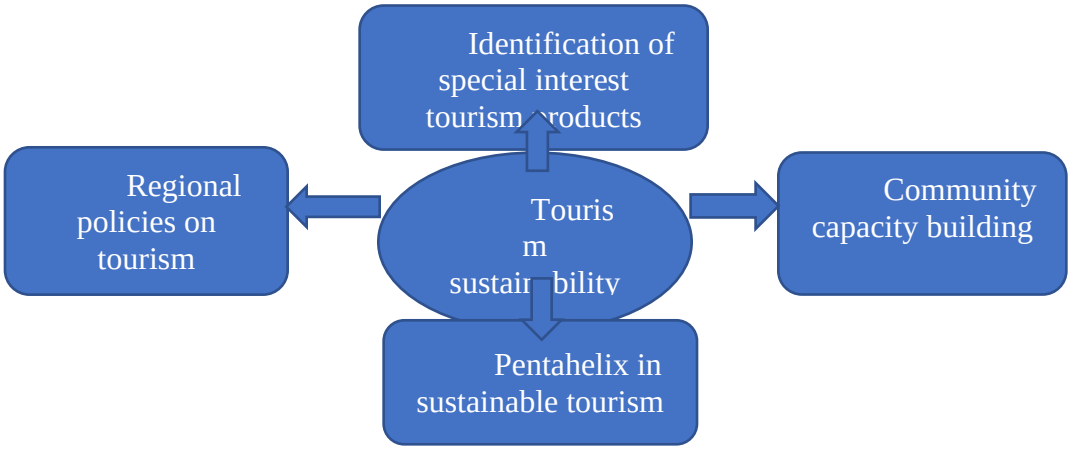
Stakeholder Collaboration in the Transition Towards Sustainability and Tourism Development

Collaborative development is a vital aspect of stakeholder organisation in the transition towards sustainable tourism development. It plays a crucial role in enhancing the capacity of local communities to manage tourism, improve visitor satisfaction, and foster stakeholder participation in creating high-quality tourism experiences. Given the diverse nature of rural tourism products, collaboration serves as the key to successful rural destination development. The transition towards sustainable tourism development requires a collaborative approach to advancing and optimising local tourism products. Sustainable tourism aims to balance development with conservation; however, its implementation involves multiple stakeholders, each representing diverse interests and objectives.

Direct stakeholders consist of community members with diverse opinions, interests, and aspirations. The influence of different social actors, each representing a

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broader community, leads to varying priorities and objectives. It is crucial to recognise the role of power dynamics in collaborative efforts. Researchers argue that collaborative development can help mitigate the challenges faced by local communities. These challenges include a lack of skilled tourism human resources, limited social capital, and insufficient financial resources for developing tourism infrastructure. Addressing these issues requires support from other stakeholders to enhance tourism development efforts.



Source: Author (2024)

The sustainability transition requires synchronization of the four pillars in sustainable tourism development. Efforts to realize this should be driven by a shared vision among stakeholders. The capacity of local communities must be built by external stakeholders to enhance participation within the socio-economic context. Local communities should serve as both the subjects and objects of future sustainable tourism development. Regional tourism policies should allocate significant space for rural communities. Consequently, rural special interest tourism products can develop and attract substantial tourist visits.

CONCLUSION

The discourse on sustainable tourism transition has been initiated by the regional government through a review of the regional tourism master plan. This initiative is driven not only by regulatory imperatives but also by regional development dynamics and the emergence of new tourist attractions. Regional tourism is seen as playing a significant role in fostering a new economic sector through tourism. Its strategic presence

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necessitates development by optimizing existing tourism potential to achieve sustainable development goals. Stakeholders have responded positively; however, considerable improvements are still required. The transition towards rural areas is key to advancing regional tourism. Currently, several tourist villages have been established, some as pilot projects and others showing signs of growth. However, the development of tourism entrepreneurship remains limited. Key constraints include the availability of skilled tourism human resources, access to capital, and partnerships with external stakeholders. These socio-economic challenges have led to minimal local community participation, ultimately affecting efforts to achieve sustainable development goals. Therefore, collaboration among stakeholders is essential in facilitating this tourism transition. Stakeholders must actively participate in supporting rural tourism development in alignment with their respective capacities.

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