

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN THE BOTUBARANI WHALE SHARK ECOTOURISM AREA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) dimension in the Botubarani Gorontalo whale shark ecotourism area. The research methodology uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies of 21 selected informants using purposive sampling and snowball techniques, representing three local communities and related policymakers at various levels of government in Gorontalo. Data analysis was carried out through thematic coding using Screenout software. The results of the study show that the implementation of CBT in Botubarani has been carried out with the formation of three communities managing the Botubarani Whale Shark ecotourism area in Gorontalo with five operational dimensions: social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental. The implementation of CBT contributes to increasing the transformation of local communities, including community capacity, income diversification, and asset accumulation, but findings in the field also show that there are inequalities in the implementation of the two dimensions of CBT, namely the environmental dimension and the cultural dimension. This study concludes the importance of strengthening the environmental and cultural dimensions to ensure the sustainability of whale shark ecotourism and sustainable community welfare in Botubarani.

Kata kunci: community-based tourism; local community; community welfare; sustainable tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the strategic sectors developed in various countries to encourage economic development and community welfare. The World Tourism Organization points out that the tourism sector accounted for 10.4% of the total global GDP, which created one in every ten jobs worldwide before the COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2023). In line with the increasing global awareness of sustainability, there has been a significant shift in the preferences of the international tourism market, with 68% of global travellers now considering sustainability as an important factor in choosing a tourist destination, up from just 34% a decade earlier [1]. Community-based Tourism (CBT) emerged as an alternative to overcome the limitations of conventional tourism. CBT emphasizes the active involvement of local communities in every stage of tourism development, from planning to management. The implementation of CBT in various countries has shown significant results in improving people's welfare. In the village of Mae Kampong, Thailand, CBT substantially increased household income and significantly reduced the migration rate of village youth. [2].

However, most research on CBT is still focused on managing static resources such as coral reefs [3], mangroves [4], and beaches [5]. Research on the implementation of CBT in the management of migratory marine wildlife ecotourism is very limited, and existing studies, such as research on whale ecotourism in the Philippines [6], turtle ecotourism in Malaysia [7], and whale shark ecotourism in Djibouti [8] have not integrated multi-dimensional analysis of CBT with a social well-being perspective. In Indonesia, CBT has shown positive results. In various tourist villages in Yogyakarta, critical factors that affect the success of CBT implementation have been identified, including local leadership capacity, social capital strength, and institutional support from local governments [9] and in Bali, successful CBT implementation is characterized by a transparent and equitable benefit-sharing system developed based on local socio-cultural values and practices [10]. These two regions are the main references in the development of CBT in Indonesia because they already have a CBT model that is in accordance with UNWTO standards and has been adjusted to regional policies [11].

In the midst of the limitations of the study, Gorontalo Province offers good practices in the implementation of CBT in coastal ecotourism areas with migratory marine animals. Since 2016, the existence of whale sharks in the Botubarani area has been a catalyst for the socio-economic transformation of coastal communities, which has also

changed the image of Gorontalo, which was previously known as an agriculture and fisheries-based province, into an ecotourism destination. Before the existence of whale sharks, tourist visits in Gorontalo were very minimal and were not taken into account in the national tourism map. [12]. Until then, there was a 200% increase in the number of tourists from 2016 to 2017 [13], as well as changes in the economic structure and orientation of regional development that now place the tourism sector as one of the main drivers of the local economy, which was previously almost entirely dependent on the primary sector [14].

The Botubarani area is the only whale shark ecotourism location in Indonesia that is less than 500 meters from community settlements, in contrast to other whale shark ecotourism locations such as in Cenderawasih Bay, Papua, or Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara, which require hours of travel time by boat. [15]. The uniqueness of this location provides accessibility benefits for tourists, but it also creates more intensive environmental pressures and requires more complex conflict of interest management between conservation needs and community economic activities. [16].

Since its development in 2016, whale shark ecotourism in Botubarani has faced long-term sustainability challenges, considering that whale sharks are a migratory species with complex and unpredictable behavior patterns. The economic dependence of communities on the presence of seasonal whale sharks creates socio-economic vulnerabilities that need to be anticipated through livelihood diversification strategies. [17]. This aspect requires an adaptive approach in the implementation of CBT that can balance the needs of conservation with the welfare of local communities. Despite good practices in the implementation of CBT in Botubarani, a comprehensive analysis of how the dimensions of CBT are implemented and contribute to the social well-being of the community in the unique context of migratory animal ecotourism is still needed. This study uses the analysis framework Suansri (2003) that has been adopted by UNWTO to analyze the implementation of CBT in Southeast Asia, through five dimensions (economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental).

The previous research has been done by Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng (2014) "Success factors in community-based tourism in Thailand: The role of luck, external support, and local leadership" examined CBT practice in Thailand and found that the successful implementation of CBT is highly dependent on the presence of strong local leadership, support from outside parties, as well as luck in tourism market access. This research emphasizes the importance of synergy between local capacity and external support in creating a sustainable CBT model.

Furthermore, Permatasari (2022) [10] "The Implementation of Community-Based Tourism in Bali: A Case Study of Penglipuran Tourism Village" shows that the successful implementation of CBT is achieved through transparency in the distribution of benefits, community involvement in decision-making, and the integration of local values in tourism management. The study also highlights the importance of local policies and active community participation in ensuring the sustainability of the CBT model in culture-based tourism villages.

This research offers novelty by analyzing the implementation of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) holistically in the context of ecotourism based on migratory marine animals, namely whale sharks in Botubarani, Gorontalo. Different from the research of Kontogeorgopoulos et al. (2014), which focused on the general success factors of CBT in Thailand and [10] Which focused on culture-based CBT in Bali, this study combines the five dimensions of CBT (social, economic, environmental, political, and cultural) with a perspective of community welfare in areas facing high ecological dynamics. This study also emphasizes the importance of the adaptive capacity of communities in the face of ecological uncertainty, an aspect that has not been widely studied in the CBT literature before, especially in the context of coastal areas with migratory species.

This study aims to analyze in depth the implementation of the five dimensions of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), namely social, economic, environmental, political, and cultural dimensions in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area, Gorontalo. This research also aims to identify the contribution of each dimension to the transformation of the welfare of local communities, as well as uncover inequalities or implementation challenges that can hinder the sustainability of community-based ecotourism in the context of migratory marine animals.

METHOD

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach method with a case study method to explore community welfare through the implementation of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in the Gorontalo whale shark ecotourism area. [18]. The qualitative approach with the case study method was chosen for its ability to investigate in depth related to the implementation of CBT within the constraints of specific contexts in Gorontalo, which allows a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the implementation and its impact in a real-life setting. [19]. The informant determination technique in this study uses purposive sampling and Snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is used by selecting individuals to be researched because they can specifically provide an understanding of the research problem and the phenomenon being researched, as well as snowball sampling, which is used to expand the network of informants by asking for references from the initial informant to other individuals who also have related knowledge. In collecting relevant data to support this research, the researcher will use data collection techniques of participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social dimension

The implementation of the social dimension in the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area shows the development of a social structure that is integrated with CBT principles. The findings in this study show the dynamics of community organization management that focuses on the involvement of local communities through an organized institutional structure. This can be seen from the formation of three management community groups since 2017, which reflects the principle of P1 (Community Ownership), where the local community is the main actor in the development of whale shark ecotourism in the Botubarani Gorontalo Area. The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) was formed in 2017 at the initiative of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office and the Bonebolango District Tourism Office with a focus on charm. This group gained formal legitimacy through the Decree of the Bonebolango Tourism Office and received training on tourist destination management standards. Furthermore, the Supervisory Society group (Pokmaswas) was formed in 2018 as a form of program implementation from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) with a focus on coastal area supervision and marine life protection. Pokmaswas consists of sixteen members with the main task of conducting daily patrols, recording data on the occurrence of whale sharks, reporting illegal activities, and ensuring tourists' compliance with the protocol of interaction with whale sharks, in the implementation of its duties Pokmaswas implements the P10 principle (Community Contribution) although it is not optimal in the aspect of education.

After the formation of the previous two communities, and because the number of tourists continued to increase, the Base Community Group was formed in 2018 to manage daily tourism operations, regulate tourist distribution, counter management, boat rental, and income distribution. This base system implements the principle of P9 (Profit Distribution) with fourteen members, and in its operation, the Pokmaswas uses a structured revenue recording mechanism. The findings in this study are that there are problems in leadership regeneration and power dynamics in the group, where member regeneration is a problem because many youth prefer positions in the field that directly generate money. Observations show that these three main institutional structures implement the P1 (Community Ownership) Principle but still face sustainability challenges.

The mechanism of involving community members in decision-making is implemented through a deliberation system that implements the P2 (Community Participation) principle. The quarterly deliberation is the main forum by involves representatives of all communities and stakeholders to discuss the evaluation of activities, income distribution, planning, and or if there are conflicts that arise in the implementation of tourism activities every day. Strategic decisions are formalized in the Village Regulation (PERDES), which strengthens the legitimacy of the management of the three communities that have been formed.

The development of community pride in Botubarani has only been implemented through the Whale Shark Festival, which has been held since October 31, 2024, as a manifestation of the P3 (Community Pride) principle. The pride of the community is also strengthened by the uniqueness of the Botubarani whale shark ecotourism area. External recognition in the form of awards further strengthens the community's pride, including the Tourism Village Award (2023), MURI's record as the closest whale shark tourism location to the beach (2024), and the ASEAN Tourism Award 2025 in the Community-Based Tourism category. The visual expression of the community's pride is seen through murals depicting whale sharks in people's homes and local attributes that show the identity of the area. The improvement of the quality of life of the community can be seen since the management of ecotourism began to be structured, implementing the P4 (Quality of Life) principle. Community capacity building is also carried out through English class programs to support communication with foreign tourists, although they still face participation constraints. Furthermore, fair division of roles implements the P8 principle (Respect for Differences) with the involvement of women in the management structure. Inclusivity is also shown through the involvement of various age groups and adaptation to the needs of women with dual roles through the arrangement of operational schedules. A rotation system between bases is implemented to prevent income gaps, implementing the P9 principle (Profit Distribution). Currently, the distribution of activities shows the involvement of 291 tourism actors, with a composition of 221 men and 70 women, showing the involvement of women, even though it is still dominated by men, especially in technical activities.

The practice of strengthening community organizations is carried out through various trainings and capacity building that implement the principles of P1 (Community Ownership) and P2 (Community Participation). The findings of this study also found problems in the management of external investments, namely, Singaporean investors who build cottages without contributing directly to the community. This indicates a gap in investment supervision and coordination between stakeholders. This problem was revealed when the researcher carried out the fourth FGD with all parties. Based on all research findings, the social dimension in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area shows the implementation of substantive CBT through an organized organizational structure, inclusive community participation mechanisms, community pride development, quality of life improvement, fair role sharing, and community capacity building. Despite this, there are still problems in terms of leadership regeneration, and gaps in investment by foreign parties that are too late to be discovered by the local government.

2. Economic dimension

The implementation of the economic dimension in the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Model in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area shows a pattern of community-based economic development that is integrated with CBT principles in the framework of Suansri (2003). The research reveals the dynamics of economic resource management that are substantively controlled by three local communities. Community development funds are realized through physical infrastructure, not cash funds, which reflects the P10 (Community Contribution) principle. Government assistance and CSR funds are transformed into physical assets in the form of public toilets, pedestrian facilities, tourist equipment, and homestays. The three Communities manage these assets independently, which reinforces the P1 (Community Ownership) principle. The ADWI prize of IDR 25,000,000 used for the construction of the community office shows a strategy to strengthen organizational capacity. This indicates that communities prioritize sustainable infrastructure development over short-term cash distribution.

However, in the implementation of the economic dimension, there are still gaps, especially in the aspect of infrastructure maintenance. Community involvement in fund management has not been optimal, shown by the unused UEP (Productive Economic Enterprise) funds from the Social Service, which indicates challenges in the implementation of the P1 principle related to access to economic resources. A significant aspect in the implementation of this economic dimension is the emergence of seven new types of jobs since 2016, which represent the principles of P1 (Community Ownership) and P4 (Quality of Life). The emergence of new jobs for local communities who were previously fishermen shows the community's adaptive pattern to the needs of tourists. These jobs include: tour boat operators (2016), diving/snorkeling equipment rental (2016), food stall MSMEs (2016), certified diving instructors (2017), underwater photographers (2020), homestay managers (2021), and paddle board operators (2022). This shows that communities are not only acting as passive beneficiaries but are actively developing economic capacity according to the P4 (Quality of Life) principle.

The professionalization of ecotourism services can be seen from the development of 12 certified diving instructors, who demonstrate the implementation of the P4 principle through community professional capacity building. In addition, the "one-door" income management system by the supervisory community group (Pokmaswas) with standardized income distribution (70% operators/30% communities) implements the P9 principle (Profit Distribution). The findings of the study show structured record-keeping: "We implemented a detailed daily revenue recording system. Each operator records the number of tourists, type of service, and gross revenue. From the gross income, we cut 20% for the community treasury, then 10% for the village..." An organized work rotation practice with a standardized revenue sharing mechanism reflects transparency and fairness of distribution in line with the P9 principle. The multi-category recording system (number of tourists, type of services, income) indicates the professionalism of community financial management that supports the P1 principle through direct control over economic processes.

The findings of homestay management with a profit-sharing system (70% owner/30% community) show the implementation of an economic dimension that integrates individual and communal interests, reinforcing the P1 and P9 principles. The implementation of social funds worth 5% of the community's net income shows the application of the strong P10 (Community Contribution) principle. The findings reveal a comprehensive benefit distribution mechanism, namely the existence of social funds for funeral funds, funds if there are married people, and religious funds or socio-cultural activities.

The practice of giving grief funds (IDR 2,000,000/family), marriage assistance (IDR 1,500,000/couple), and monthly compensation (IDR 250,000) reflects a structured economic redistribution system and the provision of annual qurbani shows that the benefits of ecotourism are not only limited to direct tourism actors, but reach the entire Botubarani community. The preservation of Toyopo traditions through community contributions demonstrates the integration of economic and cultural values that support the P10 principle. The contribution to village PAD (IDR 15,000,000-20,000,000/month) indicates the role of ecotourism in the overall economic development of the village.

Based on all research findings, the economic dimension in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area shows the implementation of substantive CBT in the aspects of job creation, income management, and distribution of economic benefits to the wider community. Communities have developed self-sustaining economic systems that are managed in a transparent and equitable manner, with integration of the principles of community ownership (P1), quality of life improvement (P4), profit distribution (P9), and community contribution (P10). However, there are still challenges in optimizing infrastructure management and utilizing external funding sources, which indicates the need to strengthen administrative capacity and information systems in communities. The economic dimension of CBT in Botubarani has succeeded in creating a sustainable local economic ecosystem with a wide distribution of benefits, but it still requires improvement in several aspects of management.

3. Political Dimension

Findings in the implementation of the political dimension in the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area reveal the dynamics of political management that focuses on institutional consolidation, increasing the participation of local populations in decision-making, and guaranteeing natural resource management rights. Institutional consolidation is implemented through several practices, such as collaboration with the Indonesian Conservation Foundation for tagging on whale sharks, standardization of tourism services through standardized boats, and the development of a regional information system that includes a whale shark presence calendar that serves as information for tourists. This practice has been key in strengthening

the community's authorization and legitimacy in the eight years since the Botubarani whale shark ecotourism area was developed. The strict regulations regarding feeding whale sharks reflect the implementation of the P1 Principle (Community Ownership), where the community has full control over key resources in tourism activities, and the shrimp used as feed are shrimp that come from the waters of Gorontalo Bay. Even so, feeding is still not allowed and is still in the slow stage of leaving feeding. This can be seen by the existence of two Rompons in the Botubarani whale shark ecokopia area. However, there are still challenges in regulating the ownership of tourism assets due to delays in the implementation of regulations restricting ownership from outside, so that some tourism assets are still owned by outsiders other than the Botubarani community.

4. Environmental dimensions

The findings of the study reveal the dynamics of the implementation of environmental dimensions in the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area. Environmental management focuses on three main aspects: carrying capacity area, waste management, environmental pollution, and ecological sustainability. In terms of carrying capacity areas, the current management still relies on limiting visiting times as the main approach, not limiting the number of tourists. The practices that have been implemented include setting operating hours from six in the morning to five in the afternoon, with an average interaction duration of 20-30 minutes per group. However, there are still challenges, such as the lack of a limit on the number of daily tourists, which can reach 50-60 people or even more than 80 people on holidays, far exceeding the WWF recommendation, which suggests a maximum of 40 people per day. An approach that prioritizes the quantity of visitors over the quality of the experience and environmental protection shows that the integration of the P5 principle (Environmental sustainability) is not optimal.

Waste management and environmental pollution are the biggest challenges that are currently facing this ecotourism area. The main problem comes from pollution caused by limestone mining activities upstream, which causes seawater to become cloudy and brownish after rain, so it will have an impact on whale sharks. Although local communities have been working to address the waste problem through the application for special land management, they face obstacles related to mining permits. Another problem that arises is the lack of supporting infrastructure, such as garbage cans, with the distance between garbage cans reaching 100-150 meters, far from the ideal recommendation of 20-30 meters. Waste recycling initiatives, such as making souvenirs from waste, have been pursued, but there has been no follow-up on implementation from the local community.

5. Cultural dimension

The implementation of the cultural dimension shows that the development is still very limited, where this dimension has not been systematically integrated as a supporting attraction, with the main focus still on the whale shark attraction as the sole attraction, without taking advantage of the local cultural richness of Gorontalo. The practice of selling food in tourist areas also does not reflect the traditional culinary richness of Gorontalo, with MSME traders only selling packaged food products that have no local cultural value. However, there has been an initiative to create an integrated tour package by combining the whale shark tourism area with surrounding villages, but the implementation is still in the planning stage.

In terms of the uniqueness of local character and culture, there are several practices that have been carried out, such as the designation of Bonebolango Regency as a conservation district in 2019, which is a formal foundation to maintain the authenticity of the local environment and culture. The practice of maintaining the basic philosophy of the Gorontalo people, "adat bersendikan sara, sara bersendikan kitabullah," is still running in the daily life of the local community, but it has not been integrated into tourism management. There is also a creative idea to introduce Gorontalo's typical krawang cloth as a solution to bridge cultural differences, although based on field observations, this practice has not been implemented. In the aspect of learning and cultural exchange that is connected to the P7 principle (Cross-Cultural Learning), the practice of capacity building of local communities, especially tour guides, has been carried out in collaboration with the Bonebolango Tourism Office. In interacting with tourists, the local community has applied a polite approach as a form of indirect introduction to the values of local wisdom. There is also an awareness of the importance of the educational dimension in tourism development, with the proposal to build a shark display house to provide educational and conservation value, although it is still in the planning stage. The implementation of the cultural dimension in CBT in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area is still not optimal, with various cultural potentials that have not been utilized to the fullest. The principles of P6 (Local Cultural Character), P7 (Cross-Cultural Learning), and P8 (Respect for Differences) have not been implemented properly, still limited to awareness of the importance of culture, not yet on the systematic integration of culture in tourism products. To strengthen the cultural dimension, further development is needed to create a tourist experience that not only focuses on whale sharks but also enriches tourists' understanding of Gorontalo's local cultural richness.

The implementation of the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) dimension in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area represents a community-based approach in the context of sustainable tourism management. This analysis focuses on the aspect of "how" CBT is implemented so that it can be the basis for understanding the welfare transformation discussed in the formulation of the second problem. A systematic study of the five dimensions of CBT that shows an asymmetrical pattern influenced by the specific socio-ecological context of the community in the Botubarani whale shark ecotourism area that manages tourism resources based on migratory animals, in this case, whale sharks.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) identifies five main dimensions, namely social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions that form an analytical framework to understand the dynamics of community-based tourism management. These dimensions are widely adopted as instruments for measuring the implementation of CBT due to their compatibility with the evaluation framework recommended by UNWTO (2020). In addition, these dimensions are descriptive and analytical, providing a structured categorization to understand the aspects that make up the CBT ecosystem. Dimensions provide a conceptual framework for organizing understanding, while principles offer a practical orientation for action (UNWTO, 2022). In the implementation of CBT in Botubarani, the social dimension is characterized by "adaptive functional differentiation," which is characterized by the formation of three community organizational structures (POKDARWIS, POKMASWAS, and Base Group) that operationalize different but integrated functions in ecotourism management. This trifunctional structure then reflects a community-based approach called "organized response to collective needs". Where Pokdarwis implements Sapta Pesona as its operational foundation (Ministry of Tourism, 2018), Pokmaswas operationalizes conservation functions with systematic monitoring protocols [20] Base community groups implement a benefit distribution system through rotation and management of communal funds.

In Mabini and Koh Tao, it was found that local communities are also often in the passive position of conservation protocols developed by external experts, with limited room for participation in conservation policy development. [21]. In Botubarani, it shows better adaptation than other locations because the erratic nature of whale shark emergence has encouraged the development of more flexible management. Communities facing high environmental uncertainty tend to develop greater adaptive capacity as a collective survival mechanism. This condition forced the community to develop a rapid response system. When managing the area of whale sharks, which are migratory animals, the community must immediately organize boats, guides, and all other operational elements. Repeated experiences of facing these situations create adaptive learning for fishing communities. After nine years of managing uncertainty in terms of migratory animals, the community values flexibility and adaptability more than rigid adherence to the rules. This then affects how the community interacts with outsiders. When external actors come up with new suggestions or protocols, the Botubarani community, already accustomed to quick adaptations, tends to filter those suggestions through their local experiences, adopting appropriate elements and modifying less appropriate ones. Thus, the implementation of the structure that occurs in Botubarani today, in addition to the formation of three communities that manage ecotourism areas, is also implemented in adaptive capacity that was initially developed to manage the uncertainty of the emergence of whale sharks, which is ultimately useful in navigating relationships with external parties that also contain uncertainty and complex power dynamics. Furthermore, the challenge of regenerating Community-Based Tourism (CBT) management does not only occur in Botubarani, but has become a common pattern found in many CBT locations in Southeast Asia. In Raja Ampat, it was found that out of a total of 47 active ecotourism managers, only 4 people (less than 10%) were under 30 years old; this situation then caused a knowledge gap that had the potential to affect the sustainability of ecotourism areas [22].

A similar situation was also found in Labuan Bajo, where almost 80% of families involved in Komodo dragon ecotourism management stated that their children were not interested in continuing the role of their parents in ecotourism management. This if left unchecked will become a critical element in the long-term sustainability of CBT, where local knowledge of resource patterns, management techniques that have been adapted to local contexts, and social networks developed over the years are at risk of being lost if not effectively transferred to future generations.

In the context of animal-based CBT, such as in Botubarani, knowledge of whale shark behavior, spawning locations, and safe interaction techniques is a critical asset that has been built through years of experience. So the absence of regeneration can create institutional vulnerability, where the sustainability of the program is highly dependent on a small group of individuals. In Komodo National Park, there has been a significant setback in CBT management after the departure of key figures due to the absence of adequate successor cadres.

The implementation of the P2 principle (community participation) is applied structurally through quarterly deliberative forums involving 30-45 participants and documented systematically. This quarterly deliberation was also strengthened by monthly meetings within the group, showing that there are efforts to formalize community participation in the management of CBT. An important aspect of the quarterly deliberations in Botubarani is its ability to produce decisions that are then formalized through legal instruments, namely through the formalization of decisions in the Village Regulation (PERDES), which creates the institutionalization of governance, which is a prerequisite for effective management of common resources. The decision-making patterns found in Botubarani generally also occur in other locations, but with a formal status that is rarely found. Where most tourist areas that use the CBT model in Thailand and Indonesia use unwritten agreements or internal organizational documents without formal binding legal force, while in Botubarani, decisions from deliberation obtain legal status through PERDES, which has binding power in the regulatory hierarchy in Indonesia. The dual legitimacy that exists in Botubarani is unique in the management of CBT, which is rarely found in coastal areas, where there is generally a separation between custom-based authorities and formal authorities [22]. Institutionalization through PERDES in Botubarani bridges the top-down and bottom-up approaches in CBT management, which is a more sustainable approach than CBT, which relies on only one type of legitimacy [23]. So that this institutionalization has also facilitated a community-based approach with a democratization approach, namely the community has formal

legitimacy to regulate access and utilization of common resources as happened in Botubarani where the results of the deliberation can become a PERDES that represents this democratization process, by providing a legal basis for the collective decisions of the local community.

Furthermore, in the implementation of the economic dimension in Botubarani, it shows a more systematic and structured flow with typical characteristics in the form of a proportional distribution model (70% operators/30% communities). Traditional CBT models are often built on the assumption that economic benefits will be shared equally across communities, regardless of differences in individual contributions (Timothy & Tosun, 2003). As was the case in Tembi, the income from homestay tourism was initially shared equally among all families in the village through village cooperatives, regardless of their direct contribution. As a result, homestay owners who invest in building and maintaining facilities feel they are not getting a fair reward, while residents who do not contribute receive an equal share. Within two years, the quality of service declined, and four of the six homestays stopped operating due to a lack of economic incentives. In the end, this program failed to achieve sustainability. The same thing happened in Ban Nong Khao, Thailand, where the distribution system through village funds created a disincentive for direct operators and made some residents enjoy benefits without contributing. This then results in a decrease in tourist satisfaction due to low service quality and lack of motivation from direct service providers.

The 70/20/10 distribution system in Botubarani reflects the implementation of benefit distribution in a community-based approach by taking into account local values and community-specific socio-economic contexts. The system allows rewards for specific skills and contributions (through a 70% allocation). A community-based approach that recognizes and values the diversity of assets and contributions within the community creates higher economic resilience. In Botubarani, although the economic distribution is differential, control over the allocation of communal funds remains in the hands of the collective process, so that the incentive structure is in line with the values and expectations of the community, while recognizing the difference in contribution between tourism actors in the community-based approach paradigm.

The implementation of community development funds in Botubarani is dominated by external interventions with a focus on the development of physical infrastructure. The main funding programs come from external parties such as the Provincial DKP (conservation equipment assistance), Bank Indonesia's CSR (waste management), and Pertamina (boat storage facilities). This pattern creates a physical infrastructure that supports ecotourism activities, but with a significant dependence on external parties. So this pattern reflects the limited technical and institutional capacity of the Botubarani community in managing and accessing independent funding. This is in accordance with the implementation of CBT in the early stages, which often makes communities highly dependent on external interventions. A real indicator of this phenomenon can also be seen in the UEP program of the Social Service, which is not accessed because no one has proposed it from Botubarani Village. This creates a gap in the community's capacity to identify and utilize available economic opportunities.

In the implementation of the economic dimension, it was found that there was an imbalance seen in the principle of environmental sustainability (P5), which was previously not related in the economic dimension but was found in Botubarani. Even though funds are available, infrastructure maintenance shows weak performance with resource allocation mechanisms not integrated with an effective accountability system. Although there is a relationship between the availability of funds and environmental sustainability, it is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of governance and structured maintenance systems, but it does not work well in Botubarani.

The pattern of implementation of this economic dimension has significant implications for the long-term sustainability of the management of whale shark ecotourism areas with the CBT model in Botubarani. The same was also the case in a study of 16 ecotourism destinations with a CBT model which found that the pattern of high dependence on external funding made communities experience significant difficulties when support was reduced, with 67% experiencing a degradation of service quality and 41% eventually stopping operations [24]. Currently, there is a global trend phenomenon in tourism areas that uses the CBT model in the implementation of the economic dimension, where in 76% of the 34 CBT destinations in Asia Pacific, it shows community dependence on external assistance. In Indonesia, a similar pattern of dependence on 82% of CBT is in coastal areas, with weak long-term financial planning initiatives being a common characteristic. So these findings lead to implications for the gradual transition from dependence to independence. The implementation pattern in Botubarani underscores the importance of integration between physical infrastructure development and institutional capacity building as a prerequisite for the sustainability of the CBT program. Without a clear transition strategy, infrastructure and programs developed through external funding risk being unsustainable in the long term.

Although it shows a pattern of dependence, the implementation of the economic dimension in Botubarani also shows positive developments in terms of livelihood diversification, the emergence of seven new types of jobs since 2016 shows economic pluralism that strengthens the community's resilience to market and resource fluctuations, so that the community does not depend only on one resource, namely as fishermen. The diversification of the economy in Botubarani shows a pattern that is different from the model often assumed in the CBT literature. Where in Conventional CBT diversifies in the form of handicrafts, local culinary products, or cultural attractions, but in Botubarani it shows a strong orientation in the modern and technology-based service sector. The emergence of jobs such as drone/underwater camera pilots, diving/snorkeling instructors, and diving equipment rental reflects contemporary skill-based diversification.

There are three patterns of economic diversification in the implementation of CBT: horizontal (addition of similar products/services), vertical (development of value chains), and structural (creation of new economic sectors). Data in Botubarani shows the dominance of structural diversification patterns with the emergence of economic sectors that were previously absent in the community's livelihood structure. Another distinguishing characteristic of diversification in Botubarani is its more organic emergence pattern in response to market needs, which is not a result of programmed interventions as is often assumed in conventional CBT models. In this case, economic diversification that is responsive to the market tends to be more sustainable than that driven by the external development agenda. Furthermore, the implementation of the allocation of social funds of 5% of the community's net income for the mourning fund, marriage assistance, and monthly compensation reflects the integration of cultural values in the economic distribution system, so that this redistribution system creates an informal social security mechanism that strengthens social cohesion, but also reveals the interdependence between economic and social dimensions that are not fully accommodated in the Suansri dimension model.

The implementation of the economic dimension that shows an adaptive and responsive pattern faces different challenges when it intersects with the political and governance dimensions. While economic diversification evolves organically according to market needs, formal political structures are not always able to adapt at the same pace. The implementation of formal legitimacy through the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Number 6/2019 provides a legal basis for communities to manage resources, but the implementation of interaction protocols with whale sharks (minimum distance of 3 meters, maximum 3 tourists per guide) shows significant inconsistencies in the implementation of the political dimension. These findings are in line with the implementation of the political dimension of CBT in Iceland, which shows that formal legitimacy does not always translate into effective practice on the ground due to conflicts of interest. In contrast to Iceland, in Botubarani, this is more due to limited monitoring capacity. This pattern is parallel to that in the Philippines and thus indicates a common characteristic in the implementation of CBT in developing countries in the form of limited supervision resources [3]. In a community-based approach, this reflects the gap between decentralization of authority and capacity building that often occurs when formal transfer of authority is not accompanied by strengthening of implementation and monitoring capacity.

The limited capacity of monitoring and enforcement in the political dimension has direct implications for the implementation of the environmental dimension. When monitoring mechanisms do not function optimally, practices that have the potential to damage the environment become difficult to control. The gap between governance and conservation efforts is very visible in the implementation of the environmental dimension in Botubarani. The implementation of the environmental dimension in Botubarani shows the tension between conservation imperatives and economic exploitation. The practice of feeding to attract whale sharks, although contrary to conservation principles, is still carried out to ensure the presence of animals that are the main attraction. This phenomenon reflects what, in the framework of Green Social Work, is referred to as the "integration gap" between environmental sustainability and economic well-being.

Compared to whale shark ecotourism sites such as Ningaloo, Australia [25] that implement a strict "no feeding" approach, Botubarani and some locations in Southeast Asia show flexibility in conservation protocols. From the perspective of Green Social Work, it acknowledges that environmental management practices are influenced by the local socio-economic context, but still emphasizes the importance of integrating sustainability values in social welfare practices. In Ningaloo, feeding practices can be more stringent due to strong national economic factors, adequate social security systems, wider diversification of livelihood sources, and more mature ecotourism infrastructure. This provides a safety net for local communities, giving them greater flexibility to implement ideal conservation protocols without having to risk losing their main source of livelihood. In contrast, in Botubarani, the socio-economic situation has limited alternative livelihoods, the absence of adequate social safety nets, and a higher dependence on income from ecotourism at this time, so the strict implementation of the "no feeding" policy risks creating an economic crisis for communities that rely heavily on the arrival of tourists to see whale sharks. The practice of feeding, although not ideal from a purely ecological perspective, becomes a pragmatic adaptation that reflects the local socio-economic context [26]. Botubarani's unique geographical conditions, with a distance between ecotourism areas and settlements of less than 500 meters, create more intense pressure than other whale shark ecotourism locations such as Cenderawasih Bay, Papua, or Labuan Bajo, which have natural buffer zones. This condition requires a more integrated approach between ecosystem management and community welfare. This situation is seen as a socio-ecological connectivity that requires simultaneous solutions to address social and ecological challenges.

The feeding practices in Botubarani can be seen not as a failure of conservation, but as a temporary adaptation in the process of implementing the transition to a more sustainable system (Coates & Gray, 2012). The success of this transition depends on the ability to address the proximity paradox, where geographically closer locations to humans often require a more complex and integrated conservation approach. Locations with high proximity, such as Botubarani, require greater investment in community capacity building, adaptive governance systems, and economic diversification to achieve a balance between human well-being and ecological sustainability. The imbalance in the implementation of dimensions is not only seen in the environmental dimension, but also found in the cultural dimension, which shows the least implementation compared to other dimensions, with the untapped potential of local culture, such as the philosophy of "adat bersendikan sara, sara bersendikan kitabullah", Toyoyo tradition, identity of "Serambi Madinah", and krawang cloth crafts in the tourist experience in Botubarani. The

lack of integration of local values contrasts with the emphasis on a community-based approach on respect for local wisdom and traditional values as the foundation of community development.

This gap is directly related to the weak implementation of the P6 (Local Cultural Character) principle, which should be one of the main foundations in the CBT framework. Principles must be integrated with local values into the management structure and tourism experience. In Botubarani, the absence of the integration of the philosophy of "adat bersendikan sara, sara bersendikan kitabullah" and the Toyopo tradition in the tourist experience shows a partial implementation of this principle. The P3 (Community Pride) principle is also affected by this deficit of cultural integration. When cultural elements such as the identity of "Serambi Madinah" and krawang cloth crafts are not optimally integrated, then the strengthening of community pride is not fully utilized. In addition, the lack of integration of local values also hinders the implementation of the P10 principle (Community Contribution) in the cultural dimension.

CBT destinations with weak cultural integration show lower levels of community identification with tourism programs, potentially creating alienation and reducing long-term participation. In the early stages of CBT implementation, the cultural dimension tended to be weaker than the economic and environmental dimensions in 72% of cases in CBT in Southeast Asia. This pattern is more prominent in destinations based on natural attractions than in destinations based on cultural heritage. Although cultural integration deficits are common, UNWTO (2018) emphasizes that cultural integration is a fundamental element in the differentiation and sustainability of ecotourism destinations with the CBT model. Without adequate cultural integration, CBT risks becoming community-based tourism that loses its local identity. In tourist areas using the CBT model in South Africa, it was found that the implementation of a weak cultural dimension showed a shorter duration of visit and lower market resilience to competition [27]. These findings are in line with cultural integration serving as a crucial differentiating anchor for destination sustainability in an increasingly competitive market (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2017). In the long term, CBT destinations with a cultural dimension that are not optimal face significant risks in the form of erosion of local identity and homogenization of tourist experiences. The uniqueness of ecotourism destinations lies not only in their natural attractions but also in the cultural dimension that provides a "sense of place".

This is contrary to the perspective of Green Social Work, which emphasizes the importance of internalizing sustainability values in the social and cultural life of the community. In Bali, the success in integrating local values with the development of tourism and an institutionalized cultural framework through traditional villages, banjars, and subak. This institutional system serves as a mechanism of cultural resilience that mitigates external influences, allowing negotiations between local values and modernity. Meanwhile, in Botubarani, the absence of similar structures makes the transmission and integration of local values more vulnerable to marginalization, reflecting the tendency to reduce CBT to mere economic instruments, ignoring its potential as a mechanism for revitalizing local identities and values. The absence of this integration has direct implications for the implementation of the principles of P3 (Community Pride) and P6 (Local Cultural Character), which are the foundation of the CBT framework.

Without the integration of cultural meaning, CBT programs risk being perceived as an external intervention, rather than as a manifestation of the aspirations and values of the community itself. To address this gap, the community-based approach offers an integrative cultural revitalization framework that makes local values the center, not the periphery, in destination development. Where it is necessary to create deliberative spaces about local knowledge and traditional values to be articulated, contextualized, and integrated into development strategies. In Botubarani, this can mean special forums to explore how the philosophy of "Sara-Jointed Customs" can inform interaction protocols with whale sharks, or how Toyopo traditions can be part of an authentic tourism experience (Suansri, 2003). Furthermore, it can be strengthened with the perspective of Green Social Work, so that cultural deepening where sustainability values are not imposed from the outside, but are found and revitalized from within local traditions. This approach recognizes that in many local traditions, such as the "Adat Bersendikan Sara" in Botubarani, there are ethical principles about human-nature relations that can be the foundation for sustainable resource management practices. Reintegrating these principles into the management of whale shark ecotourism will be able to enrich the tourism experience and restore cultural coherence in community life.

CONCLUSION

Based on an in-depth analysis of the implementation of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in the Botubarani Whale Shark Ecotourism Area, it can be concluded that the implementation of CBT still shows an imbalance between the underlying dimensions. The dominant development pattern is "economy-centric CBT," showing that the economic and social dimensions are developing quite strongly and supporting each other. This is demonstrated by the formation of seven new types of jobs, a system of equitable income distribution between operators and communities, and an integrated and participatory community organizational structure. In addition, there is an increase in pride in the identity of the local community. However, the environmental, political, and cultural dimensions still face significant challenges. In the environmental aspect, whale shark feeding practices, weak management of tourist capacity, and pollution from limestone mines are the main issues. Meanwhile, in the political dimension, although it has formal legitimacy, there are still weaknesses in the capacity for implementation and supervision, especially in terms of enforcing interaction protocols with whale sharks. The cultural dimension

shows the most minimal implementation, where local potentials such as traditional philosophy, Toyotopo traditions, and cultural products such as krawang cloth have not been optimally utilized in tourism development. Overall, CBT in Botubarani has contributed to community capacity building, income diversification, and community asset accumulation. However, its long-term sustainability still faces structural barriers that need to be addressed urgently through a more holistic and integrative approach.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research makes an important contribution to the development of CBT theory by revealing that the implementation of the CBT dimension is not always balanced, especially in the context of migratory animal ecotourism management. These findings challenge the assumptions of linearity in conventional CBT models and emphasize the importance of adaptive approaches that consider the specific socio-ecological context of each destination. In practical terms, this study provides a blueprint for the development of community-based ecotourism in Indonesia's coastal regions, especially those involving migratory animals, by emphasizing the importance of balance between dimensions to achieve long-term sustainability.

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