

BETWEEN PARADISE AND PRESSURE: RETHINKING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN LABUAN BAJO

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master of Finance in Sustainable Finance Study
Program at the Faculty of Economics and Business in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Finance in Sustainable Finance (M.Fin.)



by:

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03222310010

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DEPOK
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ABSTRACT

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Labuan Bajo, a coastal town in eastern Indonesia and gateway to the Komodo National Park, has rapidly emerged into one of the Super Priority Tourism Destination in Indonesia. Behind the rapid growth of this tourism, the region faces mounting pressures, regarding environmental sustainability, socio-cultural integrity, and economic equity. This thesis investigates the role of sustainable tourism in balancing these dimensions, with a focus on stakeholder collaboration to finding the gap in between this ecological, financials and social tensions. Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Collaboration Theory, Capacity Building Theory, Carrying Capacity Theory, and Theory of Change, study critically examines how tourism development can help to improve the sustainability of tourism with environmental protection and cultural preservation. Using a qualitative study approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders ranging from government, private, NGO, conservation actors in tourism, and local communities which also supported by field work observations and document analysis. The study reveals five persistent challenges: fragmented stakeholder coordination, the lack of baseline data, inadequate infrastructure, cultural marginalization, and the absence of sustainable financial instruments. Despite broad support for sustainability, gaps between policy and practice remain, and local community continue to struggle with access to finance and participation. The findings point toward the need for integrated governance, inclusive financing mechanisms such as green municipal bonds, and conservation fees for instance and the need of the stronger role for traditional communities in tourism planning. Labuan Bajo's transformation holds critical lessons not just for Indonesia but for ecologically sensitive destinations worldwide which demonstrate that sustainable tourism is not a luxury, but a necessity for survival, equity, and long-term resilience.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Labuan Bajo, Komodo National Park, Stakeholder theory, Sustainable Finance.

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ABBREVIATION DIRECTORY

BPOLBF	: Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores
CBT	: Community Based Tourism
DMO	: Destination Management Organizations
ESG	: Environment Social Governance
ETIS	: EU Sustainable Tourism Indicator System
EU	: European Union
GNH	: Gross National Happiness
GSTC	: Global Sustainable Tourism Council
KNP	: Komodo National Park
MSMEs	: Micro, Small Medium Enterprise
MRV	: Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification
NDC	: Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NPS	: National Park Service
OUV	: Outstanding Universal Value
PES	: Payment Ecosystem Service
SDF	: Sustainable Development Fee
SDG	: Sustainable Development Goals
SPTD	: Super Priority Tourism Destination
SSTL	: Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label
STO	: Sustainable Tourism Observatories
TBL	: Tripple Bottom Line
TEK	: Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TIES	: International Ecotourism Society
TOC	: Theory of Change
UNEP	: United Nations Environment Programme
UNWTO	: United World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background



Figure 1. Sunset in Labuan Bajo

Sources : Author's Documentation

This picture was taken on April 11th 2025, in Labuan Bajo during the sunsets. To many visitors, this is paradise. As the sunsets glow reflect over the water, but behind this image lies another reality, coral reefs are sinking, clean water become scarce, and waste is quietly piling up in places where tourists rarely go. As tourism grows, so do the tensions between conservation and tourism consumption, between preservation and profit, and between stakeholder interests and local voices.

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing global industries, offering economic opportunities and promoting cross-cultural connections. However, this growth has also led to adverse effects, including environmental degradation, cultural homogenization, and social inequality. Transportation and energy use associated with tourism contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, placing the attention of the industry at the climate issues and sustainability discussions (UNWTO, 2023).

In response to these challenges, ecotourism has emerged as a viable and ethical alternative. According to the International Ecotourism Society (TIES), ecotourism is defined as responsible tourism in natural areas that conserves the environments which involving the interpretations and educations that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of the local people (Donohoe & Needham, 2006). Unlike conventional tourism, ecotourism emphasizes minimal environmental impact, community involvement, and the promotion of conservation efforts. It seeks to create a harmonious relationship

between tourists and the environment, ensuring that the ecological and social-cultural resources of a destination are preserved for future generations.

However, ecotourism is just one facet of a broader concept of sustainable tourism. The concept of sustainable tourism has emerged as a paradigm that seeks to balance economic benefit with environmental protection and social equity. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017), sustainable tourism is tourism that satisfies the demands of tourists, the industry, the environment, and host communities while fully accounting for its present and future economic, social, and environmental effects. This comprehensive approach contrasts with traditional mass tourism, which often prioritizes short-term economic gains at the expense of long-term sustainability. This holistic approach goes beyond environmental conservation to include economic viability and social equity, ensuring that tourism development benefits all stakeholders without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable tourism is an innovative way to balance environmental conservation with the benefits tourism brings into local economies and society. Tourism that is sustainable will work to mitigate carbon footprints, preserve cultural heritage and support local community, in line with some of the global goals of climate action (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). Thus, tourism is a one of the contributors to carbon emissions yet also could act as a force of bringing environmental awareness in society.

While ecotourism is closely related to sustainable tourism, it focuses specifically on responsible travel to natural areas, promoting conservation, community well-being, and environmental education (Donohoe & Needham, 2006). In contrast, sustainable tourism encompasses a broader set of practices, addressing infrastructure, governance, social equity, and financial models. Ecotourism can be seen as a subcategory within the wider sustainable tourism framework.

Indonesia as a nation that rich in natural and cultural diversity with over 17,000 islands and more than 1,300 ethnic groups, the opportunities for sustainable tourism are immense. Labuan Bajo located in East Nusa Tenggara, it serves as the main gateway to Komodo National Park, an UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was officially designated as a Super Priority Tourism Destination (SPTD) by the Indonesian government in 2019 (Suraji et al., 2020). Komodo National Park is the world's only natural habitat of the Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*), the largest living lizard species and the last of its lineage, found exclusively on a few islands in eastern Indonesia, including Komodo, Rinca, Padar, and parts of Flores (Ariefiandy et al., 2015). According to Hidyarko et al. (2021), this

designation led to significant tourism expansion. Meanwhile, Komodo National Park itself received over 300,000 visitors in 2023, a sharp rise from approximately 170,000 in 2022 (Tirtana, 2022).

While Labuan Bajo is gaining increasing national and international attention as a flagship destination under Indonesia's Super Priority Tourism Destination (SPTD) program, its sustainability trajectory can be better understood by drawing comparative insights from other tourism models. Notably, the other prominent destinations such as Bali, offer contrasting yet informative perspectives.

Due to Bali's incredible recovery from the pandemic, foreign visitors increased to over 5 million in 2024, reviving the island's tourism industry (Wulandari, 2024). However, social inequality, cultural commodification, and environmental stress have all increased as a result of this growth (Januar, 2024). According to studies, Bali's ecological health is seriously threatened by overexploitation of its natural resources, pervasive pollution, and unequal enforcement of regulations (Komang & Segara, 2025). Unchecked coastal development and real estate speculation are upsetting traditional land-use systems, particularly subak irrigation (Diah et al., 2025). In addition, even with the growth of destination management frameworks based on local values, such as Tri Hita Karana, local communities and SMEs are frequently left out of the planning process for tourism (Komang & Segara, 2025). These results show that although Bali still attracts tourists from around the world, its reputation as a dream vacation spot is being threatened by deteriorating infrastructure, a lack of effective governance, and a diluted culture.

There are instances of sustainable tourism implemented successfully in various locations throughout the world. Motivated by the Gross National Happiness (GNH) concept, Bhutan is frequently mentioned as a model. In order to guarantee that tourism-related income funds infrastructure, healthcare, education, and environmental preservation, Bhutan has implemented a "High Value, Low Volume" strategy since 1974, charging a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD 100 per visitor per night (Isachsen, 2024). This policy has allowed Bhutan to attract mindful travellers while protecting its cultural and ecological assets. The country has also banned single-use plastics since 1999 and constitutionally mandates that 60% of its land remains forest-covered, making it one of the last biodiversity hotspots in the world (Madden-nadeau, 2023). Bhutan has become a global benchmark due to its integrated governance and community-first approach, whereas Labuan Bajo, though promising, reveals systemic gaps in planning, monitoring, and local inclusion. To contextualize Labuan Bajo's progress toward sustainability, the table provided in Appendix

1 of this thesis offers a comparative overview of key sustainability dimensions in Bhutan, Bali, and Labuan Bajo.

The situation in Labuan Bajo underscores the urgent need for sustainable tourism models that respect both environmental limits and cultural heritage. Despite the growing global interest in sustainable practices, implementation remains challenging. According to the International Energy Agency transportation is the third largest contributor to Indonesia's emissions. Tourism is one of the most responsible industries for global emissions, given the reliance on transportation, energy consumption, and infrastructure (IEA, 2022). Tourism is crucial in the sense of it can drive sustainable practices and educate people about environmental issues. Millions of travelers arrive in some countries each year across the world, thus presenting opportunities for individuals to learn the path to sustainability, adopting more eco-friendly behaviors, as well as promoting sustainability consumption (UNWTO, 2021).

Despite the economic advantage of the tourism industry natural resources are being affected by this tourism activity (Fadli et al., 2022). Like many tourism reliance countries, Indonesia has seen a rise in carbon emissions and environmental degradation linked to tourism, affecting its beaches, forests and coral reefs. This has destroyed the sensitive ecosystems with dangerous consequences for biodiversity and the local inhabitants who rely on these natural resources (Prajnawrdhi, 2021). Furthermore, the realease of greenhouse gas emissions that comes from transportation and energy used has contributed to the global emissions. Travel and tourism, along with their environmental impacts, are constantly growing. As a result, this sector is essential to support global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and achieve sustainability goals.

Nonetheless, sustainable tourism represents a significant opportunity for transformation. It encourages eco-friendly behaviors, carbon-neutral travel, community empowerment, and inclusive governance. By promoting sustainability, tourism can support broader goals like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while enhancing local economies and preserving heritage (Richards & Munsters, 2010).

Understanding the diverse perspectives of Indonesia's indigenous and local communities, particularly those living in varying socioeconomic conditions, is essential for crafting relevant policies that protect traditional lifestyles. Such policies must also acknowledge the diversity within ethnic groups, as no community is entirely homogenous. While much of the existing research focuses on the economic behaviors of local communities and their influence on regional development, this thesis aims to explore

individual social interactions and the attitudes they foster toward collaboration between stakeholders. Investigating these dynamics in the context of sustainable tourism initiatives in destinations like Labuan Bajo, seeks to contribute to the development of strategies that align cultural preservation with sustainable growth (Byrd, 2007). These insights align with a broader recognition that sustainable tourism must be context-specific, culturally aware, and socially just.

Additionally, informed decision-making is made possible using comprehensive indices to quantify sustainability, which promotes fair development and competitive market positioning (Cerina et al., 2015). Particularly considering global objectives like the SDGs, the way that tourism interacts with various economic models emphasizes the necessity of sustainable practices at all levels of industry. A more sustainable and just economic future may be possible by incorporating sustainable practices into the travel industry (Taraniuk, Korsakienė, et al., 2023).

While sustainable tourism practices come with high-costly budget and operational challenges, it also has the potential to enhance brand reputations, attract eco-conscious tourists, increase investment and access to government incentives. For businesses, the dichotomy of meeting environmental targets while maintaining profitability represents an under explored case. To fill the gap in both academic research and industrial practices, this thesis plans to assess how to balance these environmental impacts and social targets with financial sustainability. The paper provides a contribution to the discourse of sustainable tourism development in Indonesia through the role of stakeholder in balancing economic, environmental, social value.

1.2 Problem Statement

The growth of tourism in Labuan Bajo has resulted in severe environmental damage, cultural marginalization, and disjointed stakeholder cooperation, despite its strategic significance and economic potential. Although sustainability is often mentioned in policy, there are still many implementation gaps. Long-term viability is at risk due to a lack of financing mechanisms, inclusive governance, and a common vision. The quick growth of tourism, particularly as a way to enter Komodo National Park, has put more strain on local cultural systems and biodiversity. Furthermore, the lack of a shared vision among important parties, including private investors, governmental organizations, and local communities, has led to competing interests and unsustainable practices. Labuan Bajo runs the risk of jeopardizing its ecological integrity, cultural identity, and economic resilience in the

absence of a cooperative and integrated approach. In order to encourage truly sustainable tourism practices in Labuan Bajo, it is imperative to investigate how stakeholder collaboration can function as a mechanism.

1.3 Research Objective

This research aims to assess the potential of sustainable tourism in achieving a balance between economic growth, environmental sustainability, and socio-cultural preservation in Labuan Bajo. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Examine the role of stakeholder collaboration in promoting sustainable tourism practices in Labuan Bajo.
2. Identify key challenges and opportunities in aligning environmental, social, and economic interests in the region.
3. Analyze how stakeholder theory can be applied to address conflicts of interest and promote sustainable tourism development in Labuan Bajo.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the potential of sustainable tourism in driving sustainable economic growth in Indonesia. This includes understanding how sustainable tourism initiatives, aligned with low carbon emission goals, can contribute to environmental conservation, community well-being and economic resilience. Given the significant role tourism already plays in Indonesia's economy, this study aims to:

1. To examine the role of stakeholder collaboration in achieving sustainable tourism practices.
2. To identify the key challenges and opportunities faced by stakeholders in balancing environmental sustainability, socio-cultural preservation, and economic profitability in the tourist destinations.
3. To analyze the application of stakeholder theory in addressing conflicts of interest among tourism stakeholders.

1.4 Research Question

1. How do stakeholder collaborations influence the implementation of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo?
2. What are the main challenges and opportunities in balancing environmental sustainability, socio-cultural preservation, and economic viability in Labuan Bajo?

3. What specific strategies can be developed to align the interests of stakeholders for long term sustainable tourism development in Labuan Bajo?

1.5 Research Significance

This research contributes to sustainable tourism discourse by offering a stakeholder-based analysis of tourism development in Labuan Bajo, a rapidly growing destination facing ecological and cultural pressures. It presents a practical framework for harmonizing environmental, social, and economic goals through collaborative governance and sustainable finance mechanisms.

In particular, this study seeks to:

1. Bridge theoretical frameworks (stakeholder theory, capacity building, carrying capacity and theory of change) with empirical case findings.
2. Provide actionable insights for policymakers, tourism operators, and local communities.
3. Align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including:
 1. Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
 2. Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
 3. Goal 13: Climate Action

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable tourism practices, which are critical for balancing economic growth, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural preservation. This research synthesizes theories and practical case studies, providing a structured framework for understanding and applying sustainable tourism strategies. It bridges gaps in literature by compiling diverse perspectives and offering actionable insights that applicable in tourism industry. For practitioners, including policymakers, tourism operators, and community leaders, this research highlights best practices and strategies that can be adopted to foster sustainable tourism. Its practical orientation ensures that recommendations are easily implementable, particularly in resource-constrained settings. The study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

1. Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, by promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth through tourism.
2. Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, by encouraging

sustainable practices in tourism development.

3. Goal 13: Climate Action, by addressing the environmental dimensions of tourism.

1.6 Thesis Outline

The writing of this paper is based on a systematic arrangement consisting of several chapters as follows :

Chapter I: Introduction

The introduction contains the research background, research objective, research questions, research objective and research significance.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The literature review provides an overview of the conceptual framework and in-depth reviews of relevant previous study.

Chapter III: Methodology

The methodology chapter provides an explanation of research design, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

The findings and their interpretation are presented in this chapter, how the implementations of sustainable tourism and role of stakeholders used will be explained while answering the research questions.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This chapter is a closing that contains conclusions from the research findings, policy recommendations that may be offered and research limitations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Definition of Sustainable Tourism

Based on previous study, interestingly, tourists now are increasingly aware of being smart and selective in choosing their travel accommodation, such as hotels that apply environmental practices, energy-efficient products and local products that are incorporated in the green initiatives (Rokip et al., 2022). However, based on some temporary observations, one of the study cases from the hotel industry shows that there are still hotel managers that do not understand the concept of green hotels.

Green hotel is a part of green tourism product and green tourism is a part of sustainable tourism which is defined as a travel activity to fulfill sustainability by maintain natural resources, maintaining culture and contribute to economic sector (Rokip et al., 2022). According to the Tourism Law No. 10 of 2009, every tourism actor is required to keep a healthy, clean, beautiful environment and preserve the natural and cultural environment.

Sustainable tourism indicators are critical tools for evaluating and guiding tourism development to align with environmental, social, and economic sustainability goals. According to the UNWTO (2020), sustainable tourism seeks to find a balance between meeting the needs of tourists while preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations. These principles are expressed in actions, such as encouraging the use of renewable energy sources and less environmentally damaging activities, and community involvement in decision- making.

Sustainable tourism aims to harmonize environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions. Ecotourism in Komodo emphasizes protecting biodiversity, especially endemic species like the Komodo dragon, while involving locals in tourism benefits. Komodo's uniqueness, both in wildlife and cultural heritage, qualifies it as an ideal ecotourism model (Hidyarko et al., 2021).

Sustainable tourism has evolved as a response to the environmental, social, and economic pressures associated with conventional tourism development. According to UNWTO (1998), sustainable tourism development is defined as:

“Tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It involves the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural

integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.”

This broad and integrative definition aligns closely with the United Nations’ framework as discussed in Uzzo (2013), which emphasizes the systemic interconnectedness between environmental, social, and economic subsystems. In this view, sustainable tourism is not merely a subset of ecotourism or alternative tourism, but rather a governance model and long-term management strategy designed to ensure viability and equity over time.

2.1.2 Ecotourism vs Sustainable Tourism

Ecotourism has long been viewed as a promising response to the environmental degradation associated with mass tourism, particularly in ecologically sensitive destinations. As defined in much of the literature, ecotourism is characterized by nature-based experiences, environmental education, and the promotion of conservation goals. While ecotourism is frequently promoted as an environmentally responsible form of tourism, both Johnsen et al. (2008) and Uzzo (2013) emphasize that sustainability in tourism must transcend ecological considerations. Ecotourism has historically placed a strong emphasis on conservation, low-impact travel, and nature interaction; nevertheless, these attributes by themselves do not ensure long-term viability. Sustainable tourism is a holistic management approach that aims to balance the economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects of development, rather than being a separate form of tourism like ecotourism, as Johnsen et al. (2008) emphasize. Although ecotourism can be a part of sustainable tourism, particularly in areas that are environmentally vulnerable, it cannot take the place of an all-encompassing sustainability plan.

Similarly, Uzzo (2013) criticizes the simplistic use of "ecotourism" in marketing and policy discourse. He notes that despite its positive image, ecotourism usually overlooks the structural complexities of long-term sustainability. Uzzo cites the Dominican Republic's Puntacana Ecological Foundation as an example of the need for a flexible and comprehensive approach that links ecotourism to broader concerns like infrastructure, education, community health, and participatory governance. In contrast to a collection of environmental practices, his research suggests that sustainable tourism should function as a dynamic process that includes feedback mechanisms, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and quantifiable outcomes across ecological, social, and economic dimensions.

Growing public demands for "a return to nature" and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas have driven ecotourism to become one of the most important trends in international travel since the 1980s. The goal of ecotourism was to create a niche market for nature-focused experiences and to promote ecological preservation at popular tourist locations. Ecotourism has become a significant economic force by the early 21st century, accounting for 15% to 20% of global tourism revenue, demonstrating its appeal to both consumers and policymakers. But the quick rise of ecotourism has also brought to light serious issues like resource overuse, environmental damage, and improper handling of the demands of tourism on delicate ecosystems. Concern over the ecological carrying capacity of destinations and the need for models that match development objectives with ecological efficiency have grown as a result of these effects. Ecological efficiency and system-wide sustainability must be considered when evaluating ecotourism, particularly in coastal areas with low carbon emissions. Prior studies demonstrate that sustainability cannot be ensured in the absence of an objective, scientific framework to assess the carrying capacity of such sites.

These observations are consistent with the criticisms made by Uzzo (2013) and Johnsen et al. (2008), who contend that ecotourism, despite its benefits, needs to be positioned within a larger operational and strategic framework of sustainable tourism. According to Johnsen et al., sustainability is a process that calls for multi-level governance, unambiguous indicators, and long-term strategic alignment rather than a fixed label. In the meantime, Uzzo (2013) warns against the instrumental use of phrases like "ecotourism" without guaranteeing responsibility for resilience, social equity, and cultural integrity. According to him, ecotourism needs to be rethought as a component of a broader adaptive governance framework that takes systemic risks and intricate socio-ecological interdependencies into consideration. His example of the Puntacana Ecological Foundation shows how, in order to be truly sustainable, tourism projects based on ecological conservation must concurrently address infrastructure, public health, education, and stakeholder participation.

The notion that ecotourism is intrinsically sustainable is called into question by these viewpoints taken together. As an alternative, they support rethinking ecotourism as a possible element of a more comprehensive, systemic strategy for sustainability. This perspective holds that ecotourism can help achieve sustainable tourism goals, but only if it is planned with consideration for the local context, governance capabilities, stakeholder participation, and long-term monitoring. Thus, this study views ecotourism as a potential tool that needs

careful monitoring and alignment with holistic sustainability frameworks in order to make a significant contribution to social justice and environmental preservation.

2.2. Existing Research on Sustainable Tourism

2.2.1 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is a framework for striking a balance between the sociocultural and environmental aspects of tourism and its beneficial economic effects. Sustainable tourism, as defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), entails "meeting the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future" (UNWTO, 2020). This harmony guarantees that tourism preserves ecosystems and cultural heritage while creating jobs and revenue. The following are the main ideas of sustainable tourism: :

1. **Environmental Sustainability:** Sustainable tourism emphasizes reducing carbon emissions, conserving biodiversity, and minimizing resource consumption. For instance, eco-friendly accommodations utilize renewable energy sources and waste reduction systems, contributing to environmental preservation (Gössling et al., 2019; Scott, Hall, & Gössling, 2019).
2. **Socio-Cultural Responsibility:** Tourism should protect the intangible cultural heritage of local communities, such as traditional knowledge, rituals, and language. A failure to do so can lead to over-commercialization and loss of authenticity (Richards & Munsters, 2010).
3. **Economic Equity:** Sustainable tourism seeks to distribute benefits equitably among stakeholders, including local communities. It supports small and medium-sized enterprise. Supporting local SMEs, such as homestays, handicrafts, and food vendors, tourism can catalyze inclusive economic growth, ensuring that financial benefits are retained within local economies rather than being expatriated (Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025).

Table 1. Previous Studies

Author(s)	Title	Focus	Findings
Graci & Dodds, (2012)	<i>Sustainable Tourism in Island Destinations</i>	Examines sustainability practices in island tourism, including case studies (e.g., Gili Trawangan).	Effective sustainable tourism requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, addressing environmental and cultural impacts while engaging local communities.
Cerina et al., (2015)	<i>Economics of Sustainable Tourism</i>	Analyzes the economic implications of sustainable tourism, emphasizing community development.	Sustainable tourism positively impacts local economies but requires economic policies that integrate environmental and cultural considerations.
Mesci et al., (2020)	<i>Sustainable Tourism Development: Futuristic Approaches</i>	Discusses innovative strategies and futuristic approaches to sustainable tourism development.	Identified futuristic tools like green technologies and community-based management as essential for sustainable tourism's long-term success.
Edgell Sr, (2016)	<i>Managing Sustainable Tourism: A Legacy for the Future</i>	Explores global trends, challenges (e.g., overtourism), and solutions for sustainable tourism	Addressing overtourism, climate change, and cultural preservation requires strategic planning and

		management.	transformative leadership to achieve sustainability.
Buckley, (2021)	<i>Pandemic Travel Restrictions and Ecotourism's Net Effects</i>	The COVID-19 in developing nations, reduced tourism led to increased poaching, showing the critical role of sustainable tourism in conservation financing.	In wealthy nations, reduced tourism helped ecosystems recover meanwhile in developing nations, tourism loss harmed conservation efforts (funding for parks). Poaching and illegal activities spiked in areas that relied on tourism income for conservation.

Source : Author's Compilation

2.2.2 Environmental dimensions

Social responsibility, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation are the three main principles of green tourism. The UNWTO (2020) defines sustainable tourism as the one that meets the needs of present tourists and the host regions while protecting and enhancing the opportunity for the future. These concepts are put into practice through initiatives such as encouraging renewable energy use, low-impact practises, and including local peoples in governance decisions (Gössling, 2002).

Tourists have increased awareness on the importance of environmental sustainability, however, they have not fully acknowledge the green hotels concept, based on previous study which examined the green hotel concept and practices in Indonesia. The researchers found that green hotel policies, such as using renewable energy, practicing water conservation and managing waste, can enhance patron loyalty and satisfaction. However, the study also said that there were challenges such as significant financial costs in implementing green hotel

practices and the need for more consumer awareness and education (Alvianna et al., 2022). Despite the numerous sustainable tourism tools available, accurately measuring sustainability, particularly regarding the socio-cultural side effects along with the environmental effect, is still a challenge (Gössling & Peeters, 2015).

Evidence from earlier studies of eco-lodges in Costa Rica and eco-friendly travel programs in New Zealand argue that the economic and environmental benefits local businesses gain from green tourism are measurable (Honey, 2008 ; Higham & Carr, 2002). These examples also highlight the interconnectedness of conservation, community service and cultural preservation. On the other hand, destinations like Bali and Komodo National Park illustrate the perils of bad planning, like overtourism and habitat destruction.

Indonesia is well-positioned to lead the development of green tourism, given the wealth of natural and cultural assets throughout the country. The country offers unparalleled experiences, from the Raja Ampat coral reefs through to Bali's cultural traditions, that can be preserved with sustainable practices. Local practices such as Bali's Tri Hita Karana philosophy illustrate how ancient values can help guide modern sustainability efforts through the balancing of ties between people, nature and spirituality.

Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, showing good examples of tourism by combining the things that make the area special, has opened up ecotourism options where tracking and birding events, though financially rewarding, must be managed to maintain its sustainability. Even though travelers are increasingly seeking eco-friendly accommodations, adoption remains limited by high costs and poor awareness among stakeholders (Alvianna et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Socio-Cultural Dimensions

The fair distribution of tourism gains may be restricted by insufficient community involvement, while over-commercialization runs the danger of undermining authenticity. Effective models emphasize the value of participatory ways in attaining sustainable results, such as community-based ecotourism efforts.

Overcoming these obstacles is made possible by initiatives like the Tourism Law No. 10 of 2009, which requires tourism companies to preserve the environment, and global accords like the UNWTO Green Transformation Guidelines. However, expanding green tourism in Indonesia requires more money, improved public awareness, and stricter regulation.

Cultural preservation includes not only tangible cultural assets like historical sites, but also

intangible assets such as customs and practices is a crucial part of green tourism. Green tourism initiatives often incorporate local cultures into travel experiences that promote cultural identity and contribute to local economies (Bitušíková, 2021).

Culture should be regarded as a fourth pillar of sustainability, alongside environmental, economic, and social dimensions, as argued by previous literature on cultural sustainability (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). It is not simply a tourism product but a collective right and an essential element of community resilience. Cultural diversity is as vital to humanity as biodiversity is to nature (UNESCO, 2002). Furthermore, Richards and Munsters (2010) stress that cultural tourism contributes to sustainability not only through economic benefits but by reinforcing identity and local participation. Their work supports the idea that inclusive and participatory cultural engagement leads to deeper, more enduring development outcomes.

Sustainable tourism is especially characterized by the preservation of culture and active involvement of local communities. Cultural tourism is a form of green tourism reliant on both sustainable practices and the preservation of traditions alongside the opportunities to conduct commercial activities. For example, in Bali, *Pariwisata Budaya* (Cultural Tourism) is a holistic endeavor that bundles social, cultural, and religious dimensions to guide the development of the tourism sector.

Local frameworks in Indonesia, like Bali's Tri Hita Karana, which is based on harmony between culture and environment, are prime examples of how traditional knowledge may direct the growth of sustainable tourism (Mudana et al., 2021). In Bali, implementing green tourism is part of the cultural tourism philosophy. The local regulations pertaining to Balinese cultural tourism, or *Pariwisata Budaya*, are outlined in Peraturan Daerah Bali Number 3 Year 1974, Number 3 Year 1991, and Number 2 Year 2012. Due to local regulations, Tri Hita Karana, Hinduism, and Balinese culture are the foundations of Balinese cultural tourism (Mudana et al., 2021). Parahyangan (God), pawongan (person), and palemahan (physical environment) are all covered in the Tri Hita Karana local knowledge. The palemahan is closely tied to the green hotel debate.

2.2.4 Economic Dimensions

The economic potential of green tourism lies in its ability to generate income while preserving the environment. For instance, adopting sustainable practices can enhance destination attractiveness, meeting the growing demand from environmentally conscious travelers. Studies indicate that tourists increasingly prefer accommodation and services that

incorporate eco-friendly initiatives, such as green-certified hotels and locally sourced products (Rokip et al., 2022).

One study examined the concept of green destination tourism from an Islamic economic perspective with a case study in Pulesari, Yogyakarta. The effect of green tourism is positive on the local economy in terms of job and income generation; however, unchecked or planned green tourism can also have adverse effects (Hidayat et al., 2020).

Green tourism emphasizes the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources would benefit economic growth and job creation. Nonetheless, the research further highlighted the challenges related to the targeted investment required (Ibrahim & Yusof, 2017).

The earlier research further shows that there is an urgent need for investment, policy support, and stage of collaboration to face challenges to implement green tourism development in Indonesia. The researchers emphasized the role of government incentives and regulations in transitioning toward more sustainable practices for businesses and consumers, as well as the value of public-private collaboration to leverage resources and expertise (Bonioti, 2023).

Previous studies emphasize that tourism is one of the most important roles of economic growth in developing countries. Their empirical study conducted on Pakistan shows that tourism not only generates jobs but enhances the income in both formal and informal sectors which supports foreign exchange reserves due to increased trade and investment (Khalil et al., 2008)

In 2014 the tourism sector is estimated to make a 9% contribution to GDP in Indonesia, which is also important for the economic development (Hidayat et al., 2020). By integrating green tourism practices into the sector, it can further the contributions to the sustainable methodologies, resource independence and inclusive development. Sustainable tourism boosts local economies by generating sustainable job opportunities and supporting small businesses. This approach directs tourism revenue into community projects where the income is more equitably shared, thus ensuring that the economic benefits are reinvested in conservation efforts (Gössling & Peeters, 2015). Examples of resilience due to employing eco-tourism programs in the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park provide income and job opportunities for residents (Fadli et al., 2022) .

Green tourism, also linked with blue economy, by emphasizing marine and coastal areas, encourages the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs while preserving the ocean ecosystems health. On the other hand, the brown economy usually refers to conventional, unsustainable economic practices that lead

to high levels of pollution and degradation, such as fossil fuel consumption (Taraniuk, Korsakienė, et al., 2023).

It is also critical to address challenges including financial constraints, stakeholder collaboration and public awareness. Business incentives and developments in eco-tourism infrastructure will be a crucial role. The increased demand for responsible travel gives Indonesia an opportunity to find itself at the forefront of sustainable tourism leaders. By aligning with international frameworks, the country has the potential to take the lead in sustainable tourism development.

2.3 Komodo Island as a Protected Area and Ecotourism Site

2.3.1 Komodo's Status as a National Park and UNESCO Site

Komodo National Park (KNP), located in East Nusa Tenggara, was officially established in 1980 to protect the unique Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*), one of the world's last surviving giant lizard species. In 1991, the park was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, acknowledging not only its exceptional biological value but also its role in preserving critical marine ecosystems. It is also recognized as a Man and Biosphere Reserve, underlining the global importance of balancing ecological preservation with sustainable human livelihoods. The park covers a total area of 173,300 hectares, comprising 58,499 hectares of terrestrial land and 114,801 hectares of marine habitat, which include coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests (Walpole & Goodwin, 2001).

Komodo National Park is one of the earliest examples of conservation tourism in Southeast Asia, setting the foundation for Indonesia's broader ecotourism strategy. Today, it is included as one of the government's "Super Priority Tourism Destinations" and heavily featured in the national Rencana Induk Pembangunan Kepariwisata Nasional (RIPARNAS) and Renstra Kemenparekraf 2020–2024. This dual identity—as both a strict conservation zone and a rapidly expanding tourism site—poses governance challenges that are central to the tensions discussed in this thesis (Buehler, 2020; Walpole et al., 2001).

2.3.2 Ecological Significance

The ecological value of Komodo Island and the nearby national park is exceptional. The Komodo dragon, an apex predator that evolved in geographic isolation and is unique to the park, is its flagship species. Because of anthropogenic pressure, genetic fragmentation, and habitat loss brought on by climate change, Komodo dragons are at high risk of going extinct,

according to recent ecological research. The sensitivity of Komodo dragon habitats to environmental changes is highlighted by Ariefiandy et al. (2015) and Purwandana et al. (2014), particularly on lower-altitude islands like Nusa Kode and Padar. Climate models indicate a significant decline in suitable habitats for Komodo dragons, though exact projections vary.

In addition to its terrestrial biodiversity, Komodo National Park is home to some of the Coral Triangle's most abundant marine habitats. More than 1,000 fish species, 14 whale and dolphin species, 253 reef-building coral species, and 70 sponge species can be found there (Cohn, 1994). For endangered species like dugongs, sea turtles, and manta rays, the region provides vital feeding and breeding grounds. However, destructive fishing practices, coral bleaching, rising ocean temperatures, and damaged anchors are all posing a growing threat to this biodiversity. Since many Komodo dragon prey species depend on nearby coastal habitats for their survival, Ciofi et al. (2007) stress the importance of marine-terrestrial interactions for maintaining the integrity of Komodo's ecosystem.

According to Ciofi and Bruford (1999), Komodo Island is a biological treasure trove—a "natural laboratory" where evolutionary processes can be observed in real time. Yet its ecological significance cannot be separated from the socio-political challenges of conservation. According to Buehler (2020), the park's biodiversity is vulnerable to both direct human activities like infrastructure development and tourism as well as more general processes like change in rainfall patterns, sea level rise, and global climate change, all of which endanger local livelihoods and biodiversity.

2.3.3 Community Roles and Rights in Conservation

Local communities in Kampung Komodo, Papagarang, and Rinca have inhabited these islands for generations and consider Komodo dragons as kin, based on origin myths where a woman birthed twin—a child and a Komodo dragon. These cultural narratives foster a deep spiritual respect for conservation. However, development models often marginalize their roles than co-stewards.

Historically, communities have engaged in conservation-friendly practices. Yet when deprived of tourism benefits, some resorted to harmful activities like dynamite fishing or unregulated land clearing. The lack of consistent benefit-sharing has raised concerns over social justice and equity in conservation. Walpole and Goodwin (2001) emphasize that without fair distribution of tourism revenue, local support for conservation may erode.

The human communities inhabiting Komodo National Park, such as those in Kampung Komodo, Rinca, and Papagarang, have lived in the region for generations and are deeply connected to both the land and its iconic species. According to local origin stories, the Komodo dragon is viewed not as a threat but as kin—descended from a shared ancestor with humans. This cultural worldview historically fostered coexistence, where taboos and traditional ecological knowledge helped regulate resource use and minimize human-wildlife conflict (Walpole & Goodwin, 2001; Buehler, 2020).

However, with the formal designation of the park and the introduction of strict conservation policies, particularly those inspired by “fortress conservation” models community rights and roles were severely curtailed. Access to marine resources, farming areas, and forests were restricted, and many communities experienced loss of livelihood or were excluded from tourism profits generated in the name of conservation. Walpole and Goodwin (2001) found that while tourism brought infrastructure and jobs, local attitudes toward conservation were shaped by perceived fairness in benefit-sharing. When communities felt excluded or exploited, support for conservation declined even among those with cultural ties to the Komodo dragon.

Recent conservation discourse has shifted toward community-based and co-management models, advocating for stronger inclusion of indigenous rights and local governance in biodiversity management. Despite some pilot programs, for example, cultural tourism initiatives led by Yayasan Komodo support for weaving community most of the formal decision-making still rests with park authorities, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, or government bodies. This disconnect perpetuates a sense of exclusion. Quoting from the field interviews of this thesis, community members often described “tourism as the economy revolves only around tourist attractions that they do not manage” reinforcing the perception that they are not equal partners in managing or benefiting from their ancestral lands.

For conservation in Komodo to be truly sustainable, local communities must not only be included in economic activities but also recognized as custodians of ecological and cultural heritage. This requires both legal recognition and governance mechanisms that allocate meaningful power and resources to local actors.

2.3.4 Tourism Pressures and Overuse Issues

Tourism has surged rapidly in Komodo, peaking at over 423,000 visitors in 2023. While this growth generates revenue, it also intensifies environmental pressure. For example, the introduction of large-scale developments like the so-called “Jurassic Park” project on Rinca

Island sparked public outcry and led UNESCO to issue a warning in 2021, urging Indonesia to halt any project threatening the park's outstanding universal value.

Tourism has become the primary driver of economic growth in Komodo National Park, especially since the designation of Labuan Bajo as a Super Priority Tourism Destination. However, this rapid increase in visitation reaching over 420,000 tourists in 2023 has brought significant ecological and social challenges. Infrastructure development, cruise ship arrivals, and increased snorkelling, diving, and trekking activities have placed tremendous pressure on both terrestrial and marine ecosystems (Walpole & Goodwin, 2001; Buehler, 2020).

In marine zones, coral reefs have been degraded by anchor damage, boat traffic, and destructive fishing practices. On land, Komodo dragons have shown signs of behavioural change due to overfeeding by tour guides for photo opportunities, making them more habituated to humans and less alert to natural stimuli (Ariefiandy et al., 2015). Additionally, pollution and solid waste management remain ongoing problems. Tourism-generated plastic waste, untreated sewage, and increased freshwater demand have led to ecosystem strain and public health concerns.

The 2019 proposal by the East Nusa Tenggara government to temporarily close Komodo Island to tourism in order to allow habitat recovery sparked public debate and even national-level controversy. Although the plan was later revoked by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, it exposed fundamental governance contradictions between conservation and commercialization. UNESCO, in 2021, issued a formal reminder to the Indonesian government to avoid irreversible damage to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the park due to poorly planned infrastructure development (UNESCO, 2021).

Moreover, tourist interactions have led to behavioural changes in Komodo dragons. Overfeeding for photographic purposes has made them less alert and more dependent on human activity, impacting their survival instincts. Outside the park, deforestation and poaching of prey species such as the Timor deer also disrupt the food chain and push dragons into human settlements, risking conflict. Invasive species such as dogs and cane toads are an emerging threat, as well as coral reef degradation from anchor damage and chemical-based fishing.

These overlapping pressures call for stronger enforcement of carrying capacity limits, implementation of zoning regulations, and prioritization of sustainable visitor management strategies. As emphasized by Walpole (2001), sustainable ecotourism should not compromise conservation goals, and pricing policies must reflect the real cost of environmental preservation.

There is also the issue of unequal benefit distribution, where state-owned enterprises such as *InJourney* or tourism concession holders receive a majority of profits, while local communities remain in peripheral roles. For example, concession permits were granted to several companies, including PT Sagara Komodo Lestari on Rinca Island (22.1 hectares), PT Komodo Wildlife Ecotourism on Padar Island (274.13 hectares) and Komodo Island (151.94 hectares), and PT Synergindo Niagatama on Tatawa Island (15.32 hectares) (WALHI & Sunspirit for Justice and Peace, 2021). This development model has been criticized for commodifying nature and marginalizing local communities.

To mitigate these issues, there is a pressing need for:

1. Enforced visitor caps based on ecological carrying capacity, to ensure that tourist numbers remain within limits that ecosystems can sustain without degradation (Coccossis & Mexa, 2004; UNWTO, 2018).
2. Transparent revenue-sharing mechanisms, so that local communities benefit equitably from tourism income and are incentivized to participate in conservation (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012; Walpole 2001).
3. Strengthened local roles in tourism management, which enhances sustainability by integrating indigenous knowledge and fostering stewardship (Scheyvens, 1999; Cole, 2006);
4. Strategic environmental assessments before launching new tourism infrastructure projects, to identify and mitigate potential ecological and social impacts (Glasson et al., 2011).

In the absence of these safeguards, tourism activities in Komodo National Park may ultimately conflict with the very conservation objectives they are intended to support, resulting in ecological degradation, the loss of cultural heritage, and the further marginalization of local communities within one of the world's most significant protected areas

2.3.5 Labuan Bajo as Gateway of Komodo National Park

One of Indonesia's most prominent tourism destinations is Labuan Bajo, located in East Nusa Tenggara. It serves as the main gateway to Komodo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Komodo National Park comprises three main islands; Komodo, Rinca, and Padar which spanning over 173,300 hectares, 58,499 ha of terrestrial , including 114,801 hectares of marine ecosystems. It is the only home to the largest living lizard and the last of

its lineage, the iconic Komodo dragon. There are also hundreds of coral species, and a wide variety of flora and fauna (Hidyarko et al., 2021).

In Labuan Bajo, the influx of tourism has sparked research into ethical, culturally sensitive tourism approaches, aiming to mitigate unintended harm to local communities and ecosystems. The sociocultural effects of tourism on nearby communities have been the subject of recent studies, which have emphasized the necessity of striking a balance between development and observance of regional customs and culture. In response to Labuan Bajo's Super Priority Destination tourism program, for example, Islahuddin et al. (2022) emphasize the significance of community adaptation and collaboration, pointing out that local communities are actively working to match tourism development with their social structures and cultural values.

While this tourism boom has stimulated infrastructure development and economic growth, it also poses serious threats: biodiversity loss, resource depletion, pollution, and socio-cultural disruption (Fatina et al., 2023). Concerns have been raised by local stakeholders, such as the communities, conservationists, and government bodies, regarding with the weak coordination.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory

Triple Bottom Line Theory was introduced by John Elkington in the late 1990s. Sustainable tourism principles are derived from Triple Bottom Line Theory principle. Unlike traditional business models which prioritize maximizing profits and monetary returns to shareholders, The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework expands the company's purpose to include the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity (Elkington, 1994). The three lines, or dimensions, that make up the TBL are people, planet, and profit.

The economy part or "profit line" is the financial performance of a corporation, like revenue, profits and shareholder value. This dimension focuses on making sure that businesses have economic viability and can operate in the long run. The economic measure includes examples of variables such as financial performance and profitability, job creation and economic development, and long-term sustainability of operations and supply chain (Slaper & Hall, 2011). The environmental, or "planet," line reflects the impact of business practices on natural resources and their sustainability. This includes topics like energy use,

pollution, waste, carbon emissions, and land use. The social aspect or “people line” of the Triple Bottom Line targets what impact a business has on its employees, customers, and communities.

The “people” line is aligned with corporate social responsibility and obligates the organization to be accountable not only to shareholders but also employees, vendors, clientele, and the local community in which an organization operates (Villamor & Wallace, 2024). Social factors could include education impact, employee health & safety, community involvement, diversity and inclusion.

In social terms, it is equally significant to emphasize the community concern as it provides job opportunities and inspires the local businesses. Community participation is important in developing the necessary infrastructure to support tourism. Tourism is a source of income that fuels the overall income of that area. The local community involved in decision-making can help create conditions that enhance the tourist experience while ensuring that the benefits of tourism are felt by the community. This involves creating amenities that serve both visitors and locals, leading to a better quality of life for all. Moreover, it can foster social cohesion. When the community works together, such as promoting their cultural heritage, it enhances community ownership and encourages collaboration. This unity can lead to more effective tourism strategies and a more welcoming environment for tourists. Lastly, it has an important role in preserving the intangible cultural heritage. As Indonesia has abundance of cultural heritage that needs to be protected, community helps in preserving the cultural heritage and feel a sense of ownership over their cultural resources, they are more likely to participate actively in their preservation. This involvement fosters pride in their heritage and encourages sustainable practices that benefit both the community and the tourist itself (Richards & Munsters, 2010).

The Triple Bottom Line approach encourages companies to consider the interdependence of these variables, rather than focusing solely on one bottom line. It is a misconception that socially and environmentally focused companies are less profitable. The financial success of a business can be supported by including the social and environmental bottom lines. As an example, most environmentally friendly projects that can reduce energy and water usage will also be cost-effective over the long run. While the notion of a company possibly possessing bottom line other than a quantification of finances could appear contradictory, the idea that these other aspects are beneficial, even essential to the enduring success of a corporation, is not overly controversial (Boley & Uysal, 2013).

2.4.2 The Stakeholder Theory and Collaboration Theory

Stakeholder Theory and Collaboration Theory are two theories applied to sustainable tourism relevant to this study. Stakeholder Theory itself means a management theory that suggests businesses should consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in their decision-making processes. Stakeholder Theory accounts for both internal (primary) and external (secondary) stakeholders and emphasizes the importance of building trust through collective decisions (Laplume et al., 2008).

Stakeholder Theory, originally proposed by Freeman (1984), posits that organizations or projects are influenced by and must account for the interests of diverse stakeholders to achieve long-term success. In the context of sustainable tourism, this theory emphasizes the importance of identifying and engaging key stakeholders—such as local communities, government agencies, private sector actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and tourists—to ensure balanced and inclusive development. Each stakeholder group holds unique interests, resources, and influence, and their collaboration is critical for addressing environmental, socio-cultural, and economic challenges. For Labuan Bajo, a rapidly growing tourism destination, applying Stakeholder Theory can help harmonize conservation efforts with economic growth by fostering participatory decision-making, equitable benefit distribution, and shared responsibility for sustainability (Salman et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, Collaboration Theory proposes that to address complex problems and spur innovation in tourism, multiple stakeholders must cooperate through group decision-making and resource sharing (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Wood and Gray (1991) further conceptualize collaboration as an interactive process among stakeholders governed by shared rules, norms, and structures that enables collective decision-making about the future of a shared domain. Collaboration theory is a social science that looks at how people and organizations collaborate to accomplish shared objectives, frequently through communication and collaboration. Collaboration is the process of constructively managing differences, cooperating to resolve inter-organizational issues through polite, open communication, shared decision-making, power and resource sharing, and acknowledging the interdependence of all participants.

A wide range of stakeholders are involved in collaboration and partnerships in sustainable tourism, including private hospitality businesses, tourists, host communities, the government, nonprofits, the media, and educational institutions (Mozes et al., 2025). These theories have been adopted as tools for sustainable management of national parks, as one of the examples of eco-friendly tourism spot in many countries (Moore & Weiler, 2009).

2.4.3 The Capacity Building Theory

InJourney, is one of the state-owned enterprise and the leader of tourism industry in Indonesia, would require fundamental capacity building to enhance sustainable tourism through each initiative. It focuses on building the capacity of stakeholders to plan and implement sustainable tourism practices. As stated by Maspul, (2021), tourism development in Indonesia is aimed to alleviate poverty, to preserve nature, and to develop culture that requires a strong capacity building among local communities and tourism operators. Also as a process that requires enhancing the capabilities and active participation of local communities through capacity building, to contribute to effectively plan implementation, and sustain tourism initiatives (Idris et al., 2021).

As Indonesia's state-owned tourism holding company, InJourney has been reshaping its strategy to increase the attractiveness of the tourism ecosystem to foreign tourists. This involves moving away from marketing-led to destination-led tourism development, which highlights the importance of building capacity for destination management and ahead of the sustainable development goals.

Furthermore, the importance of sustainable tourism seems has been recognized by the government of Indonesia. For instance, dozens of islands similar to Bali that are working toward a new kind of tourism, aimed not at mass, quantity, but quality, preservation of cultural tourism. Reforms of this nature underscore the importance of capacity building for local stakeholders as practitioners who need to develop and hone the skills needed for effective tourism management over the long term. In summary, capacity building is a critical component in assessing and implementing sustainable tourism in Indonesia. It enables stakeholders to effectively contribute to sustainable tourism development, aligning with national strategies and the evolving focus of organizations.

2.4.4. Carrying Capacity Theory

The concept of tourism carrying capacity (TCC) is a foundational principle in sustainable tourism discourse, referring to the maximum number of visitors a destination can accommodate without causing environmental degradation, declining visitor satisfaction, or adverse impacts on local communities (Santos & Brilha, 2023; Clayton, 2002). Originally derived from ecological sciences, carrying capacity has evolved to encompass not just biophysical constraints, but also socio-cultural and economic dimensions (Clayton, 2002;

Han, 2018). According to Yusoh et al., (2021), TCC encompasses multiple subcomponents, which is environmental, physical, social, and economic, each essential in determining how tourism development can be sustained over time. Social carrying capacity, in particular, addresses the tolerance level of host communities towards tourism pressure and how it influences residents' quality of life and cultural integrity.

Incorporating infrastructure, ecological thresholds, and socio-economic systems, more recent models have promoted an integrated carrying capacity framework (Han, 2018; Haribudiman et al., 2023). To assess the ecological efficiency of low-carbon tourism environments, for example, Han (2018) created a state-space and linear programming model, emphasizing the significance of matching visitor numbers with environmental thresholds in coastal regions. This strategy is in line with empirical research conducted in Indonesia, such as Firmansyah et al.'s (2023) application of a system dynamics model to Komodo National Park. According to their research, Padar Island can accommodate up to 39,420 visitors per year, while Komodo Island can accommodate up to 219,000. If these numbers are surpassed, the habitat of the Komodo dragon could be harmed.

Furthermore, Haribudiman et al. (2023) contend that in order to anticipate sustainability limits across a variety of destinations, carrying capacity must be integrated into national tourism governance through multi-dimensional planning that incorporates territorial, environmental, social, governance, and economic criteria. Clayton (2002) also highlights that carrying capacity is a crucial analytical tool for managing the trade-offs between resource conservation and tourism development, even though it cannot entirely determine tourism policy on its own. Applying these ideas is crucial to preserving ecological integrity and promoting economic growth in protected and highly valued biodiversity areas like Komodo or Labuan Bajo. In order to direct tourism management within sustainability thresholds, carrying capacity theory functions as a strategic planning tool as well as a predictive tool.

2.4.5. Theory of Change

To understand how sustainable tourism can be promoted in socio-ecologically sensitive locations like Labuan Bajo, this study uses a Theory of Change (ToC) framework. This framework integrates both individual and structural components to explain how change occurs in tourism systems. It draws from a variety of disciplines and sources, such as environmental education (Krasny, 2020), behavioral change communication (Camargo &

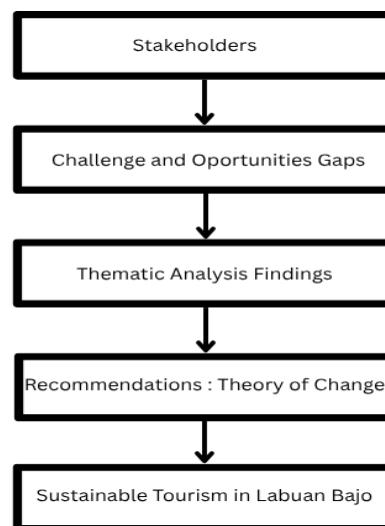
Schönberg, 2023), governance in mixed systems (WHO, 2020), innovation in tourism (Moscardo, 2008), and conservation conflicts (Walde et al., 2019).

The ToC approach highlights that sustainable tourism outcomes arise through multiple, interconnected pathways, in contrast to traditional linear models that presume knowledge inevitably results in behavior change. These include intermediate outcomes (e.g., social capital, trust, efficacy), behavioral/system change (e.g., co-governance, innovation adoption), and finally, the ultimate outcome: a resilient and inclusive tourism ecosystem that protects biodiversity, promotes local well-being, and ensures economic viability.

2.4.6 Conceptual Framework

To visualize how the literature connects with this study, the following conceptual framework was developed:

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's work

2.5 Sustainable Tourism Indicator

Sustainable tourism indicators vary by country and organization, reflecting regional environmental, economic, and cultural priorities. These indicators help monitor the impact of tourism on ecosystems, communities, and economies, ensuring long-term sustainability. Below is a detailed analysis of sustainable tourism indicators used globally.

2.5.1 United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

The UNWTO is a leading global body promoting sustainable tourism. Their Indicators of

Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations Guidebook provides a framework for measuring sustainability. Key indicators include:

1. Environmental Indicators: Water and energy consumption, waste management, and biodiversity conservation.
2. Socio-Cultural Indicators: Local community participation, cultural heritage protection, and resident satisfaction with tourism.
3. Economic Indicators: Revenue distribution, employment generation, and tourism's contribution to GDP.
4. Tourist Satisfaction and Behavior: Monitoring visitor perceptions, behavior, and environmental awareness.
5. Crisis Management: Disaster preparedness and response strategies for destinations.

One practical application of UNWTO's framework is sustainable tourism observatories, piloted in China, which systematically apply indicators to monitor tourism's long-term effect (UNWTO, 2013).

2.5.2 GSTC Indicators on Sustainable Tourism

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) provides internationally recognized criteria that serve as a baseline for sustainable tourism development across destinations and businesses. These criteria are structured around four key pillars:

Sustainable Management :

1. Emphasizes long-term sustainability planning, monitoring systems, and transparent policies.
2. Encourages inclusive governance through participatory approaches with local communities, the private sector, and governmental institutions (GSTC, 2013)

Socioeconomic Impacts :

1. Supports local employment, fair labor practices, and community development.
2. Prioritizes local sourcing, equitable economic benefits, and contributions to infrastructure, education, and healthcare (GSTC, 2023).

Cultural Impacts :

1. Promotes the protection and celebration of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
2. Seeks to avoid the commodification of culture by ensuring respectful visitor-community interactions (GSTC, 2019).

Environmental Impacts

1. Advocates for efficient resource use, waste reduction, and sustainable procurement.
2. Encourages biodiversity conservation, pollution control, and careful management of wildlife tourism.

These criteria are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are used globally to guide certification schemes, destination assessments, and corporate responsibility programs in tourism (GSTC, 2013).

2.5.3 European Union (EU) Sustainable Tourism Indicators

The EU Sustainable Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) helps destinations assess and improve sustainability (Commission, 2016). Key indicators include:

1. Environmental Impact: Greenhouse gas emissions, land use changes, and biodiversity loss.
2. Social and Cultural Aspects: Local employment, community involvement in tourism planning, and cultural heritage preservation.
3. Economic Performance: Tourism revenue retention within the destination and support for local businesses.

The ETIS model has been adopted by several European countries, helping them integrate sustainability into policymaking.

2.5.4 Australia: Ecotourism and Protected Area Management

Australia's sustainable tourism efforts focus on ecotourism and national park management (Government, 2021).

Indicators include:

1. Protected Area Management: Number of national parks with tourism regulations and enforcement of minimal-impact tourism guidelines.

2. **Tourism Contribution to Conservation:** Direct funding from tourism to conservation initiatives, such as park maintenance and wildlife protection.
3. **Visitor Impact:** Monitoring carrying capacity and tourist footprint in fragile ecosystems.

2.5.5 China: Sustainable Tourism Observatories

China has established Sustainable Tourism Observatories (STOs) under UNWTO guidance to track tourism's environmental, social, and economic impacts (Jigang, 2012). These observatories provide:

1. **Annual Reports on Sustainable Tourism:** Covering economic benefits, community response, environmental degradation, and policy outcomes.
2. **Indicators on Urban and Rural Tourism Development:** Ensuring tourism supports local communities while minimizing ecological damage.
3. **Tourist Behavior and Satisfaction Monitoring:** Addressing congestion, pollution, and price fluctuations

2.5.6 Seychelles: Sustainable Tourism Certification

The Seychelles Sustainable Tourism Label (SSTL) ensures hotels and businesses follow sustainability practices (Seychelles, 2021). It includes:

1. **Energy and Water Efficiency:** Benchmarks for resource use and waste management.
2. **Biodiversity Protection:** Encouragement of conservation initiatives in tourism businesses.
3. **Community Engagement:** Incentives for local hiring and cultural preservation

2.5.7 United States: National Park Service (NPS) Tourism Indicators

The US National Park Service integrates sustainability by monitoring:

1. **Visitor Impact on Natural Resources:** Tracking foot traffic, erosion, and wildlife disturbance.
2. **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Use of renewable energy in visitor centers and eco-friendly transportation options.
3. **Economic Contribution:** Measuring how tourism benefits local economies

and supports conservation efforts (National Park Service, 2024).

Sustainable tourism cannot be assessed without structured frameworks. Several institutions and researchers have proposed indicators to measure tourism's impacts. These indicators help guide planning, monitor performance, and inform future policy.

In this research, three main indicator frameworks were applied. To evaluate the sustainability of tourism in Labuan Bajo, this study draws upon two globally recognized indicator frameworks: the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Sustainable Tourism Indicators, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria and Tripple Bottom Line (TBL) Framework. These frameworks were selected for both their comprehensive scope and practical application in tourism policy and destination-level assessment.

Created since the 1990s, the UNWTO indicators provide a fundamental method for tracking the effects of tourism on the environment, society, and economy. They can be tailored to various settings, such as islands, coastal regions, and protected areas (UNWTO, 2004). They support the UN 2030 Agenda's sustainable tourism priorities by acting as both diagnostic and decision-making tools for local government.

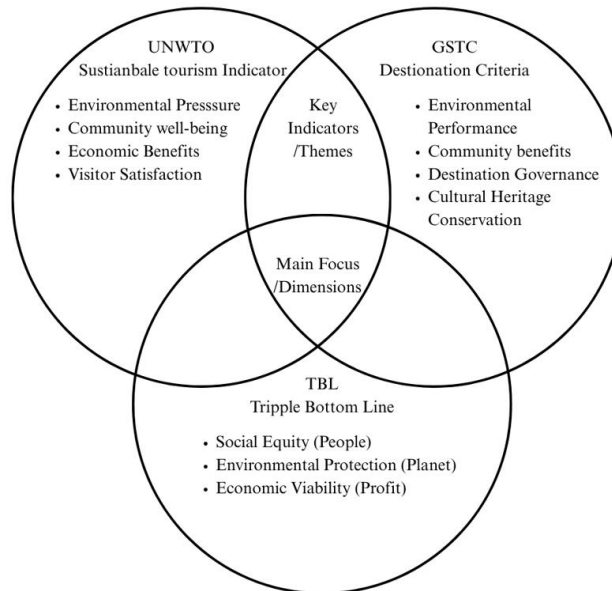
In contrast, the GSTC Destination Criteria offer a performance-based set of guidelines intended to direct governments and destination management organizations (DMOs) toward sustainability objectives. These requirements are organized into four primary pillars: environmental preservation, cultural heritage preservation, socioeconomic benefits to the community, and efficient destination management (GSTC, 2019). Their strength lies in offering measurable indicators and policy-relevant benchmarks, allowing for destination comparisons and long-term tracking of progress.

Both the interview design and the thematic coding structure were influenced by these indicator frameworks. They made it possible for the researcher to consistently adhere to global best practices in the assessment of tourism sustainability while methodically identifying stakeholder concerns in Labuan Bajo.

Finally, the findings in Chapter 4 were analyzed for thematic overlaps and stakeholder priorities using the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which combines social (people), environmental (planet), and economic (profit) dimensions. When combined, these frameworks guaranteed a comprehensive method for assessing the sustainability of Labuan Bajo's tourism growth. These indicators supported both the data collection (semi-structured interviews) and thematic coding process, particularly in linking stakeholder concerns to measurable tourism outcomes. This also allowed the research to evaluate the current state of

Labuan Bajo's tourism development against internationally accepted sustainability benchmarks. The Figure 2 below shows the relationships between this three indicators and framework :

Figure 3. Intersection across UNWTO,GSTC, TBL



Source : Author's work

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A research approach serves as the overarching framework that guides the study from foundational assumptions to the methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This research adopts a qualitative approach, as it seeks to explore and understand the perspectives and experiences of various stakeholders regarding the role of sustainable tourism in balancing economic, environmental, and social dimensions. This aligns with the qualitative tradition, which is well-suited for investigating complex social phenomena as constructed and interpreted by individuals or groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The underlying worldview of this research it is essential to explain how it influences the choice between a quantitative and qualitative research approach. Given the constructivist paradigm underpinning this study, a qualitative approach is most suitable, as it enables a nuanced and contextualized understanding of how sustainable tourism is perceived and implemented by various stakeholders (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, this study employs a qualitative case study design, allowing for an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, in this case, tourism development in Labuan Bajo.

A case study is well-suited for investigating complex phenomena within a specific context, aligning with the focus of this research on Labuan Bajo as a Super Priority Tourism Destination. A case study provides detailed, context-rich insights and is characterized by its particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic nature (Miles & Huberman, 2014). The central epistemological question guiding this approach is: *What can be understood from this single case?*—an inquiry focused on uncovering the unique features, dynamics, and implications of sustainable tourism practices within the Labuan Bajo context (Stake, 2005).

Qualitative method was employed in this study, when under explore about a subject and the aim is to generate a deeper perspective, develop new concepts or describe previously unknown causal mechanisms that is essential. Also, the qualitative method is suitable for exploratory study (Gerring, 2017).

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, guided by the need to explore the nuanced perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders regarding sustainable tourism development in Labuan Bajo. The case study design is suitable for in-depth exploration of complex phenomena in their real-life contexts (Yin, 2003). A qualitative approach allows for rich, detailed understanding of how economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability are negotiated and perceived on the ground.

This approach is consistent with previous tourism research that emphasizes interpretivist paradigms to understand the meanings that stakeholders attach to sustainability (Dredge & Jenkins, 2016; Slaper & Hall, 2011). It also aligns with Creswell (2007) assertion that qualitative inquiry is appropriate when exploring participants' views and values within complex social settings.

3.2 Research Setting

This study is conducted in Labuan Bajo, an East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia tourist destination that is expanding quickly. A key component of Indonesia's sustainable tourism strategy, Labuan Bajo is one of the country's Super Priority Tourism Destinations (SPTDs), as designated by the Indonesian government. The region is well-known throughout the world for its distinctive cultural heritage, abundant marine biodiversity, and close proximity to Komodo National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Because of its significance to the national development agenda and the clear conflicts between maintaining the environment and sociocultural integrity and promoting economic growth through tourism, Labuan Bajo was chosen as a case study. Since receiving heightened attention under Indonesia's tourism master plan, Labuan Bajo has experienced rapid infrastructure expansion and increased tourist inflows, raising both opportunities and sustainability concerns for local communities.

The site is particularly valuable for this research due to its intersection of stakeholders, including national and regional government bodies, tourism operators, local communities (including indigenous groups), conservation organizations, and private bodies. These actors embody varying interests, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how economic, environmental, and social objectives are negotiated in a real-world tourism development context.

3.3 Research Participants

Participants were purposefully selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure diversity and depth of perspectives. Stakeholders were selected based on their direct involvement or influence in Labuan Bajo's tourism development, following Freeman's (1984) stakeholder classification. Participants represent a balance of:

Table 2. Participants Group Representation

Group	Respondents
Government	1. Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores (BPOLBF) 2. Secretary regent of Labuan Bajo
NGOs	Yayasan Komodo
Local Community	1.Sanggar Compang Toe 2. a Chief Village
Conservation Bodies	1.Komodo National Park 2. <i>Anonymous</i>
Tourism Actors	1.West Manggarai Homestay Association 2. <i>Injourney</i>

Source : Author's work

The sampling strategy followed guidelines proposed by Patton (2002), who argues that information-rich cases should be strategically selected to provide insights into the central themes of the study.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Multiple sources of data were employed for triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018), including:

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

This research used semi-structured interviews and purposeful sampling to interview the widest array of tourism actors in Labuan Bajo. A semi-structured interview was chosen because they are both flexible and focused; the researcher was able to follow the protocol, but at the same time could to adapt to the experience of the interviewee and emerging themes, unlike the structured interview; whereas as a contrast the unstructured approaches can have a higher degree of flexibility and depth, these interviews are less inclined to

change and to derive deeper insights, with the likelihood of reduced objectivity (Kallio et al., 2016).

Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow for a pragmatic compromise between consistency and adaptability, particular when dealing with different backgrounds of participants, whether government agencies, local communities, tour operators and NGOs (Brinkmann, 2013).

In this study, it is particularly useful in capturing insights that cannot be found in document analysis or observation. Using interviews, it helps to understand the perceptions, experiences and values of the various actors involved in the development of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo.

This study adopted purposive sampling to identify and engage individuals who were best positioned to provide relevant and insightful information, in line with the research objectives (Fusch et al., 2018). As is common in qualitative research, this approach was chosen to access expert perspectives and explore complex dynamics from those directly involved in the issue at hand. In Labuan Bajo, where tourism governance is shaped by multiple layers of authority and sometimes competing interests, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to include key stakeholders with practical experience and influence over sustainable tourism efforts. This sampling strategy ensured that the voices included in the study were not only informed but also critical to understanding the broader structural and contextual factors that affect sustainability at the local level. A total of 11 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including:

Table 3. Stakeholders List

NO.	Institution	Name
GOVERNMENT		
1.	<i>Injourney</i>	<i>Anonymous</i>
2.	Pemerintah Daerah Manggarai Barat (Secretary)	Bapak Fransiskus Sales Sodo S,E
3.	Balai Taman Nasional Komodo (Head)	Bapak Hendrikus Rani Siga, S.Hut, M.Sc.
4.	Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores (BPOLBF)	Bapak Dr. Frans Teguh, M.A.,CHE,
NGO		

5.	Yayasan Komodo	Ibu Widya Djatiningrum
6.	Conservation Bodies	<i>Anonymous</i>
LOCAL COMMUNITY		
7.	Homestay Association Manggarai Barat	Bapak Ludgerius Minus
8.	Desa Komodo (Head of Village)	Bapak Achsan
9.	Kampung Melo (Chief Community)	Bapak Yosef Ugis
10.	Desa Kampung Air (Head of Village)	Bapak Supandril
11.	Health Workers	<i>Anonymous</i>

Sources : Author's compilation

These stakeholders were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a broad representation of views and interests related to economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability.

Interviews were conducted solely by the author, from 18th – 25th of April 2025, in Labuan Bajo, to clarify emerging themes and validate preliminary findings. The sequencing of interviews was intentional: the researcher first interviewed community members and local actors to understand broader narratives around tourism development, before engaging with policymakers and tourism operators to gain deeper insight into strategic decisions and implementation.

All interviews were conducted in a private and comfortable setting, such as meeting rooms, offices, or quiet public venues in Labuan Bajo. With participants' informed consent, audio recordings were made to ensure accuracy in data transcription and analysis. Participants were assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their involvement in the study.

3.4.2 Observations

A key technique in qualitative research is observation, which provides firsthand access to the environments, interactions, and behaviors pertinent to the study (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., 2019). It helps researchers to record contextual information and subtle nonverbal

clues that are frequently missed during document analysis or interviews. This approach can lead to a more thorough and grounded comprehension of the research environment.

This study used non-participant observation during field visits to Labuan Bajo and Komodo Island in addition to interviews and document analysis. Using this approach, a deeper understanding of the local context was obtained by looking at the local environment, community dynamics, tourism infrastructure, and the implementation (or lack thereof) of sustainability practices. As opposed to participant observation, which entails actively participating in the subjects' everyday lives (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002), non-participant observation permitted the researcher to observe without interfering, noting outwardly observed behaviors, practices, and environmental indicators. These observations provided valuable supplementary data, helping to cross-check and enrich stakeholder accounts, particularly in assessing claims related to sustainability, community participation, and ecological impact. Through this approach, the research was able to capture aspects of the tourism landscape that may not have been fully articulated in interviews. In this study, non-participant observations were conducted in various locations across Labuan Bajo to understand how sustainable tourism principles are manifested or contested in practice. These locations included tourist attractions, local marketplaces, community-based tourism sites, infrastructure projects, and conservation areas.

The observations aimed to identify:

- Visible signs of environmental management
- Community engagement in tourism activities
- Interactions between tourists and local residents
- The extent of local cultural representation in tourism experiences
- Physical infrastructure supporting sustainable tourism (e.g., pedestrian zones, hotels, green space)

These observations complemented the interview data by providing a real-time and embodied understanding of tourism's impacts on local life and landscapes. They were particularly useful in addressing the first and third research questions, which explore the framing of sustainable tourism and its implications for local communities and environments.

Every observation session was meticulously recorded in field notes, which included both first analytical impressions and thorough descriptions of the environment. The study's credibility was increased by the subsequent coding and analysis of these notes in

conjunction with interview transcripts and document data, which supported the thematic analysis and data triangulation (Patton, 2015; Fusch et al., 2018). In order to minimize any disturbance to the normal course of daily activities, observation sites were selected based on their accessibility and pertinence to the research questions. Every observation was conducted in a discrete and moral manner, adhering to accepted qualitative research guidelines, with special focus on protecting people's privacy and honoring regional traditions.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Documents are an important and accessible source of information in qualitative research, offering rich contextual data without the need for transcription, as required in interviews or observations (Gay et al., 2019). In this study, document analysis was used as a complementary method to support and deepen the insights gained from interviews.

Reviewing policy documents, institutional reports, and other official records provided a clearer picture of the frameworks, priorities, and roles of different stakeholders involved in Labuan Bajo's tourism development. These materials were particularly valuable for triangulating interview findings and situating stakeholder perspectives within the broader policy and institutional context shaping sustainable tourism in the region.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's, (2006) six-phase framework:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Themes were interpreted considering the theoretical lenses of the Tripple Bottom Line Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Capacity Building Theory and Carrying Capacity Theory.

The Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, which includes data familiarization, code generation, theme development, and refinement. An

inductive approach was used to allow themes to emerge organically from the interviews and field data. Codes were initially tagged based on repeated language, tensions, or patterns of meaning. These were then clustered into categories and synthesized into broader analytical themes that capture the core findings of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006b). Table below illustrates this thematic progression, from raw participant expressions to high-level themes, which form the structure of Chapter 4.

Table 4. Thematic Table

Sample Codes (from interviews)	Category	Theme
<i>“We’ve been walking alone”</i> <i>“Our communication with the local government is coordination...we work together, organize trips, develop human resources, and promotion.”</i>	Governance Fragmentation	4.1 Stakeholder Fragmentation and Coordination gaps
<i>“Our first problem in the tourism sector is stock/baseline”</i>	Lack of Baseline and Data	4.2 The Unreadiness of Systems and Lack of Baseline Data
<i>“ Our father tells stories, immediately they are interested. Finally, we welcome the people from outside.”</i>	Community Cultural Revival	4.3 Cultural Revitalization and Community Empowerment
<i>“We are just waiting for extinction, if there is anything that can be done, it is only to slow it down. Because what happened in Labuan Bajo, several locations in the south of Labuan Bajo will become a hotel area (Golomori).</i>	Overtourism and Infrastructure Pressure	4.4 Infrastructure and Overtourism Pressures

<i>“Ya, I know about green bonds, but I think we need the consultant (Yayasan Komdo) to come here again.”</i> <i>“No, we have not established that. But, if it is implement, it will be great.”</i>	Financial Access and Awareness	4.5 The Missing Link: Sustainable Funding Mechanism
<i>“We are not against tourism. But we want tourism that pays attention to us, not just building luxury hotels for guests”</i> <i>“So I said, the ones who can build the village are us, ourselves. I mean, capacity building”</i>	Local Aspiration	4.6 Local Aspirations and Sustainable Futures

Source: Author’s work

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in this study were guided by established practices in qualitative research. All participants were informed about the aims of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were also given the choice to be identified or remain anonymous; while most agreed to be named, anonymity was respected for those who requested it. The researcher remained attentive to ethical sensitivity throughout the process, particularly in handling personal narratives and ensuring participants' perspectives were represented with accuracy and care. These procedures are consistent with ethical principles for qualitative inquiry involving human subjects (Catherine et al., 2010).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Synthesis of Key Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study, organized thematically in accordance with the three main research questions outlined in chapter 1. Each research question is examined through two corresponding findings derived from fieldwork, document analysis, and stakeholder interviews. This approach ensures that each section of the discussion responds directly to the study's objectives, while drawing on evidence from the field.

To maintain clarity and coherence, the six findings of this study are structured to directly respond to the three research questions. The following outlines how each set of findings corresponds to the respective questions:

1. Research Question 1: How do stakeholder collaborations influence the implementation of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo?

Finding 4.1.1: Stakeholder Fragmentation and Coordination Gaps

Finding 4.1.2: The Unreadiness of Systems and Lack of Baseline Data

2. Research Question 2 : What are the main challenges and opportunities in balancing environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and economic viability in Labuan Bajo?

Finding 4.1.3: Cultural Revitalization and Community Empowerment

Finding 4.1.4: Infrastructure and Overtourism Pressures

3. Research Question 3 : What specific strategies can be developed to align the interests of stakeholders for long-term sustainable tourism development in Labuan Bajo?

Finding 4.1.5: The Missing Link: Sustainable Funding Mechanisms

Finding 4.1.6: Local Aspirations and Sustainable Futures

This mapping ensures analytical clarity by linking each finding directly to the study's research questions. It provides a structured flow from diagnosing systemic and institutional barriers, to unpacking socio-cultural and environmental tensions, and finally to identifying strategic opportunities for aligning stakeholder interests in sustainable tourism governance.

4.1.1 Stakeholder Fragmentation and Coordination gaps

This chapter presents the findings of the research on sustainable tourism development in Labuan Bajo, based on a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews, field observations, and document reviews. It highlights the roles, perceptions, and coordination of key

stakeholders, the governance and funding mechanisms in place, and the challenges in integrating environmental and cultural preservation into tourism policy. All findings are discussed in relation to stakeholder theory and sustainable development frameworks.

The development of Labuan Bajo as one of Indonesia's Super Priority Tourism Destinations (SPTD) reveals persistent fragmentation among tourism stakeholders at the local, regional, and national levels. Although official narratives frequently highlight synergy among the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, InJourney, the West Manggarai Regency Government, and private sector actors, field interviews suggest that integrated planning and coordination remain largely absent. Each stakeholder tends to operate within its own mandate, timeline, and agenda, with limited mechanisms for collaborative governance or participatory decision-making. Mr. Fransiskus Sales Sodo, an official secretary from the West Manggarai Regency, explained:

"We do have the same interests; we have the same goals. But so far we have been walking alone. So yesterday I gathered them." (Frans Sodo, 2025).

This statement was made following his facilitation of a focus group discussion on waste management planning. The remark reflects both the shared objectives and the disconnection among key actors. To better understand the context, it is essential to briefly introduce *InJourney*. InJourney is a state-owned enterprise holding company that manages key tourism assets under the Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises. Its role includes developing infrastructure, managing destinations, and branding Indonesia's tourism image. In the context of Labuan Bajo, InJourney focuses on investment-driven projects, including the development of hotel complexes, marinas, and cultural facilities.

The interviews with InJourney representatives also reveal the lack of coordinations that can lead to fragmented coordinations. As the *Anonymous* person, said :

"The biggest challenge is coordination. This means that we must also understand that we are only one aspect in the tourism ecosystem as a business entity. But in developing tourism itself, there are agencies that should be responsible for advancing the tourism industry. Conducting training is not our job actually. Conducting education is not our job. We are a business entity. It should be done by other agencies."

On the other side, BPOLBF (the Labuan Bajo Flores Tourism Authority) prioritizes broader regional tourism development across multiple districts. The Director, Mr. Frans Teguh from BPOLBF explained:

"We got a mandate by the government to accelerate tourism. Our authority is not only in Labuan Bajo, but it also spreads to Alor and Ende. We also have our own mandate

in Manggarai Barat. So, we have a sector in Labuan Bajo that we manage. Our communication with the local government is coordination. We do synergy, collaboration. If, for example, there is a logging business destination in West Manggarai, we work together — organize trips, develop human resources, and promotion.” (Frans Teguh, 2025).

These findings highlight two key gaps. First, the limited authority and influence of local government in directing tourism development. Second, the lack of a unifying vision among national-level actors (InJourney, BPOLBF, Ministry), leading to fragmented actions that risk duplicating efforts or overlooking local needs.

This aligns with critical literature on stakeholder management. Sternberg (1997) warns that an overly broad stakeholder approach can lead to managerial paralysis, as decision-makers face competing expectations without a clear prioritization mechanism. Fu et al., (2022) emphasize that expanded stakeholder engagement increases coordination costs and administrative complexity. Similarly, Meyer et al., (2004) suggests that when social networks among stakeholders grow without strategic alignment, institutional inertia increases, making change more difficult to implement.

These studies align with the current reality in Labuan Bajo: while multiple stakeholders are present, collaboration lacks coherence, creating inefficiency rather than synergy. Instead of contributing to sustainable development, the uncoordinated growth of stakeholder involvement becomes a structural barrier.

Moreover, overlapping jurisdictions between the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Komodo National Park Authority, and local communities compound these challenges. As Mr. Ludgerius Minus from the Homestay Association shared:

“In Komodo National Park, there are villagers living there, there are three villages. The name Komodo National Park is under the Ministry of Forestry; it has a law on ownership, because it is under the Ministry of Forestry, the people there are not allowed to have rights to the land.” (Ludgerius Minus, 2025).

This situation demonstrates a contradiction between sustainability principles and on-the-ground realities. While the concept of sustainable tourism emphasizes community inclusion and benefit-sharing, national policies on conservation can marginalize local inhabitants, creating social and legal tensions. The lack of a shared sustainability framework that balances ecological protection with human rights and local participation, makes it difficult to implement integrated, equitable tourism policy.

In contrast to literature that highlights successful stakeholder-driven sustainability models (e.g., Thailand's community-based tourism or Costa Rica's eco-governance model), Labuan Bajo exhibits a governance void (Luekveerawattana, 2024 ; Porras & Chacón-Cascante, 2018). What is missing is not just a roadmap, but shared values, trust, and adaptive collaboration structures. While sustainable tourism policy is framed nationally, its implementation at the local level lacks the coordination, consistency, and inclusion necessary for meaningful change. These findings suggest that a rethinking of stakeholder roles, power, and coordination mechanisms is urgently needed if Labuan Bajo wants to fulfill its potential as a sustainable tourism model.

4.1.2 The Unreadiness of Systems and Lack of Baseline Data

One of the most pressing challenges hindering the implementation of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo is the lack of reliable baseline data and the unreadiness of supporting institutional systems. This section analyzes the implications of this data gap on strategic planning, climate financing, and sustainability certification, revealing a disconnect between sustainability discourse and real-world capabilities.

The Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores (BPOLBF) acknowledged that the absence of accurate, validated data significantly impairs efforts to implement evidence-based tourism planning and undermines the region's eligibility for accessing green finance mechanisms such as carbon trading and carbon tax schemes. As emphasized by Mr. Frans Teguh, Director of BPOLBF:

“Our first problem in the tourism sector is stock/baseline. So we want to do carbon trade, we must be consistent in supporting the baseline, how much carbon do we release. We are very dependent on the awareness of each hotel about how much emissions they emit from tourists, the calculation has not been done properly. Priority sector for NDC, the tourism sector has not entered. There is indeed a desire to move towards carbon trade. So, the homework for Indonesia is that we do not have a baseline yet and the data source for carbon calculations does not exist. Then, tourism has not been a priority for our efforts to reduce environmental impacts. However, the potential for tourism to enter carbon trade is quite high. We have made a roadmap regarding tourism carbonization, 3 priority sectors, hotels, restaurants and cafes, and tourist attractions. Only nationally the data has not been validated properly. Once we commit to carbon, every year we need to have progress, how far the reporting, verification, this sector must be prepared. BPO, cannot be made alone, must be a national scheme.” (Frans Teguh, 2025).

This quote highlights the systemic disconnect between national ambitions and local capacities. Despite intentions to align tourism with Indonesia's climate goals, the tourism sector remains excluded from Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. As a result, stakeholders like BPOLBF operate in a vacuum motivated but unsupported. This reveals a clear contradiction with literature emphasizing the importance of monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems for climate-linked funding eligibility (UNDP, 2023).

Another implication of this knowledge gap is the reliance on external consultants to generate impact assessments, which often overlook local knowledge or fail to contextualize their findings within the socio-cultural realities of Labuan Bajo (Chambers et al., 2010 ; Cole, 2007). This perpetuates a cycle of external dependency and epistemic exclusion, where Labuan Bajo becomes the subject of externally driven projects rather than a co-designer of its own sustainable development pathways (Escobar, 1995 ; Smith, 2008).

The lack of both sustainable financial mechanisms and measurable environmental baselines contributes to a persistent gap between sustainability discourse and actual implementation. As highlighted by Mr. Frans Teguh, Labuan Bajo currently lacks the data infrastructure and MRV (monitoring, reporting, verification) systems necessary to access green or climate financing, leaving its sustainability claims largely unsupported. This finding confirms earlier studies such as Ruhanen et al. (2017) and Gössling & Hall (2009), which argue that in many developing tourism contexts, the discourse of sustainability is often symbolic, but unsupported by infrastructure and data systems.

The gap between sustainability branding and actual operational delivery has been widely critiqued in the literature. Caruana et al. (2014) emphasize that responsible tourism is often framed through narratives that appeal to tourists' ethical values, yet in practice, these claims frequently lack substance. Their research found that tourists encounter a disconnect between the rhetoric of sustainability, such as eco-labels, green marketing, and community-focused messaging and the on-the-ground realities of service provision. For example, tourists may be presented with the image of an eco-friendly resort, only to find that waste management practices or community engagement are minimal or performative. This discrepancy reflects a broader issue of symbolic sustainability, where destinations promote an environmentally or socially responsible image without embedding robust systems of accountability, measurement, or stakeholder inclusion. Caruana et al. argue that this form of narrative-driven greenwashing risks undermining the credibility of sustainability as a meaningful development goal, especially in contexts where local capacities to challenge or verify these claims are limited. In the case of Labuan Bajo, similar dynamics can be

observed, where sustainability discourse is present in policy and promotional materials, but is often unsupported by monitoring systems, participatory planning, or transparent evaluation processes (Caruana et al., 2014).

Another key issue is the lack of baseline data to support long-term planning. While some stakeholders have experience in accessing international grants or piloting eco-projects, such as coral restoration and waste management, there is no formal financial infrastructure that integrates these efforts into regional planning. According to interviews with BPOLBF and the Secretary of Manggarai Barat, most green tourism activities remain donor-dependent and fragmented, with no consistent environmental baselines for biodiversity, socio-cultural resilience, or carbon emissions. This structural gap hinders access to climate finance and weakens the region's capacity for sustainable development.

Interviews revealed that existing green tourism activities are mostly donor dependent. Additionally, the absence of scientific baselines on biodiversity, carrying capacity, and socio-cultural resilience makes it difficult to justify or monitor large-scale interventions. As the Secretary Regent of Labuan Bajo, Mr. Frans Sodo said:

“Conceptually, we have, but in terms of experience, we already have a lot. We already have a waste management system that has been built up. We evaluate the waste management system. Starting from a few days ago, last week I have gathered the waste management community. There were 17 of them. On the first day, I had an FGD with them. On the second day, I had an FGD with the complete Hotel and Restaurant. I wanted only this restaurant, to then create a proper waste management roadmap. Well, it turns out that when we were this restaurant, they also had quite a lot of funding. Which maybe we can collaborate together. Likewise, Hotels and Restaurants, they are also lucky for funding. Well, I think these are good things. So, we have the same interests, have the same goals. But so far we have been walking alone. So yesterday I gathered them.” (Frans Sodo, 2025).

International funding opportunities often remain out of reach because Labuan Bajo lacks the integrated data systems and institutional readiness to meet global standards for reporting and accountability. So, does the national data systems. While there is a clear willingness among local actors to collaborate, the absence of centralized data systems and national integration limits their ability to access climate finance or participate in carbon markets. This reflects broader institutional unreadiness, but not only in Labuan Bajo but in Indonesia's tourism governance generally.

As highlighted by Chambers (1997) and Escobar (1995), the overreliance on external consultants to generate sustainability reports which without local data or contextual

understanding that creates “epistemic dependency.” This reinforces what Ruhanen et al. (2017) calls the colonial gaze in tourism development, where local regions are recipients of externally driven models rather than co-creators of their own strategies. Labuan Bajo exemplifies this critique: the absence of MRV systems forces reliance on external assessments that may fail to capture local complexities.

This disconnect has practical implications: it restricts the region’s ability to attract sustainable investment, perpetuates donor dependency, and delays the integration of tourism into Indonesia’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). It also hinders the tourism sector from aligning with SDG targets related to climate action and responsible consumption (SDG 12 and 13).

4.1.3 Cultural Revitalization and Community Empowerment

Tourism in Labuan Bajo and Komodo Island presents a double-edged reality for local communities. On one hand, it offers platforms for cultural expression and potential economic empowerment. On the other hand, rapid development has introduced risks of cultural commodification, marginalization of traditional roles, and gendered inequalities in benefit distribution.

During interviews with Yayasan Komodo and community leaders, several initiatives emerged where local traditions where woman weaving have been revived through tourism-linked programs. One of the consistent themes emerging from community-level interviews is the community empowerment in tourism roles. Women in Labuan Bajo are plays crucial roles as, Mrs. Widya Djatiningum, former member of Yayasan Komodo, said :

“So we empower it not only on Komodo Island, but also in the surrounding community that supports it, of course it will support the tourist destination. So, people who go there don't just see Komodo, but can also shop for SMEs, can see people weaving. Well, there was a weaving village that had originally stalled.” (Djatiningum, 2025).

“Why did it stall at that time? Because many people didn't order anymore. So, the mothers stopped. She farmed. Her husband also farmed coffee, well she was also at home looking after her child, not weaving anymore. Finally, we invited Dekranas to cooperate, then we invited work from ITB, and finally we were able to provide capital to the mothers, so that the mothers could live their weaving again. Until finally it was continued, now it is continued and continues, now it can participate in Bank Mandiri's Fashion Week, because at that time we were the ones who funded Bank Mandiri initially. It is active until now. The

mothers are weaving. One day I met them at Jakarta Fashion Week, which was sponsored by Bank Mandiri, so now they are under Bank Mandiri's guidance." (Djatiningum, 2025).

A key example of community-centered cultural revitalization in Labuan Bajo is the reactivation of a previously stalled weaving village, as described by Mrs. Widya. The village had ceased weaving activities due to declining market demand, forcing women to return to agricultural work and domestic roles. However, through coordinated support from Dekranas and ITB, along with financial backing from Bank Mandiri, the mothers were able to resume weaving. Their products eventually gained national exposure, even participating in Jakarta Fashion Week under the guidance of Bank Mandiri. This case reflects how external collaboration can effectively empower local women and restore cultural practices, not only as heritage but as sustainable economic activities. This finding confirms Salazar's (2012) assertion that cultural heritage must be allowed to evolve meaningfully, not frozen in time. It also reflects Richards' (2018) view that creative industries, such as weaving, can enrich identity while stimulating tourism innovation. This revival also supports stakeholder theory, which promotes inclusive partnerships and equitable value distribution in sustainable tourism (Freeman, 1984; Bramwell & Lane, 2000).

The case demonstrates that cultural empowerment, especially of women, requires more than visibility, it depends on sustained investment, institutional partnerships, and integration into the broader tourism economy. Importantly, this underscores that cultural sustainability must not be confined to heritage sites like Komodo Island but should extend to the wider cultural landscapes and communities that support the destination.

As Scheyvens and Biddulph (2017) argue, linking tourism with creative economies can enhance both local resilience and tourism authenticity. Considering these insights, sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo must be designed to support cultural microenterprises through access to finance, marketing channels, and capacity-building programs, ensuring that local traditions thrive not as tourist commodities but as dynamic sources of community pride and livelihood.

For example, in 2019, a devastating fire destroyed four traditional houses in a local village near Labuan Bajo.

"Four houses burned down. It happened at night," explained Mrs. Lucy, daughter in law of chief community in Kampung Melo.

The incident, which occurred suddenly around midnight, left the community with no time to save their belongings:

“All the equipment, none of our stuff survived. We got here, it was already on fire.” Despite the traumatic event, the survivors rebuild their homes independently. *“So far... the helps from the government or from the district... there is none. Except from the BI (Bank Indonesia) earlier.”*

This response illustrates the absence of local government assistance and the critical role national institutions like Bank Indonesia played solely role in helping the revitalization of the village infrastructure. However, the community's cultural resilience is best illustrated through the revival of the *Caci Dance*, a traditional performance dance from the area. The respondent recounted a turning point in 2014 when a Dutch tourist visited and engaged with a village chief, Mr. Yosef Ugis.

“Our father tells stories, immediately they are interested. Finally, we welcome the people from outside.” Inspired by this exchange, Mr. Yosef revived the *Caci Dance*, a form of cultural expression that had been dormant. *“So he made the Caci Dance, which become the typical cultural exhibit here,”* she said.

Despite this success, the interviewee emphasized that the revitalization was driven by local passion and external curiosity rather than structured support from local government. *“If from the government... there is none,”* she confirmed. This aligns with findings in the literature that cultural sustainability often begins with community-led initiatives but fails to receive institutional support unless external actors intervene (Salazar, 2012 ; Richards, 2018). The *Caci Dance* revival, while successful, remains at risk without long-term planning, funding, and integration into formal tourism and cultural policy.

This case illustrates the critical importance of formalizing and supporting local cultural initiatives through participatory governance. Culture is not merely an accessory to tourism, but it is a foundation. As Soini and Birkeland (2014) argue, cultural sustainability should be treated as a core pillar of development, not a decorative component. Richards and Munsters (2010) emphasize that cultural tourism plays a multifaceted role in achieving sustainable development. It is not merely an economic driver but a mechanism through which community identity is reinforced, and local participation is deepened.

The story of the *Caci Dance* aligns closely with the experiences of cultural actors in Labuan Bajo, where traditions such as the *Caci Dance* are not only performed for visitors but serve as symbols of resilience and pride for the local population. It also includes how informal interactions and community resilience can give birth to significant cultural value, but these efforts must be protected through consistent support, capacity-building, and recognition. Therefore, as Richards and Munsters (2010) argue, sustainability is achieved

when tourism supports both tangible and intangible heritage, fosters social cohesion, and enhances the self-determined cultural life of the host community. Without it, valuable cultural assets may fade, especially in vulnerable communities recovering from displacement or disaster.

Tourism, particularly when led by external actors, can lead to cultural erosion. This occurs when traditions lose their original context, rituals are adapted for commercial consumption, and heritage is transformed into a visual spectacle for visitors. The shift toward visitor-centered development often leads to spatial and symbolic displacement. Cultural assets such as traditional markets, ceremonial spaces, or local symbols are redesigned to suit tourist aesthetics, sometimes at the cost of cultural integrity.

As MacCannell (1976) argues, tourism often leads to the staging of local culture, where communities perform curated versions of their traditions to satisfy tourist expectations. This approach has the potential to simplify or distort cultural expressions by giving more weight to what appeals to visitors than to what locals find meaningful. Urry (1990) proposed the idea of the "tourist gaze," which describes how tourists' perceptions of culture are influenced by what they are taught to see through media, travel guides, and advertising. This leads to the consumption of images rather than an awareness of lived cultural realities.

The prior study builds on these pillars by highlighting the significance of adaptive cultural practices and community-led cultural governance. Salazar (2012) makes the case for a change to "cultural sustainability," which sees culture as dynamic and ever-changing as opposed to static. This viewpoint opposes the essentialist interpretation of customs and advocates for more thoughtful, interactive tourism methods. Furthermore, Richards (2018) emphasizes the value of cultural creativity and stresses that the communities that create cultural expressions should have the authority to allow them to develop and evolve.

Additionally, the Kampung Melo case highlights a discrepancy between local government support and grassroots cultural revival. After the disaster, locals restored their cultural assets, but the regency offered no official support. This echoes criticisms made globally by Hollinshead (2009) and Cole (2007) regarding how top-down tourism planning fails to encourage local agency. To align with global standards on cultural sustainability, as argued by UNESCO (2002) and Soini & Birkeland (2014), tourism development must embed community ownership and recognize cultural resilience as a pillar of long-term sustainability.

These theoretical perspectives emphasize that cultural sustainability cannot be measured by tourist satisfaction but by the ability of communities to preserve, live, and evolve their

traditions autonomously. Stakeholder theory supports this by emphasizing the inclusion of marginalized voices, particularly women and indigenous groups, in tourism governance. Without this inclusion, cultural preservation risks becoming a branding tool rather than a community-led development pathway.

4.1.4 Infrastructure and Overtourism Pressures

The rapid infrastructure development in Labuan Bajo has been widely promoted under the umbrella of “sustainable tourism.” New roads, port facilities, resorts, and public amenities have been framed as essential components for transforming the area into a world-class destination. However, field interviews and observations suggest a growing disconnect between the rhetoric of sustainability and the reality on the ground, raising concerns about greenwashing, the use of environmental language to legitimize unsustainable practices.

Furthermore, the rapid expansion of luxury tourism infrastructure along Labuan Bajo’s coastline has intensified concerns over spatial justice, environmental impact, and community resource access. Two notable examples observed during fieldwork include Ta’aktana Resort, and the Katamaran Hotel, both of which have been constructed above or directly adjacent to the shoreline (Marriott, 2025). During field observation, author’s captured several photographs illustrating how such high-end developments dominate shoreline space previously accessible to the public, while altering the natural contours of the seafront. Now, the shoreline were dominated by a luxurius hotel bulding. The hotel was located in on the edge of a hill which also has direct access to the seaside. These images will be included to visually demonstrate the spatial enclosure and privatization of coastal areas.

Figure 4. Taaktana from afar, at evening.

Source : Author’s Documentation

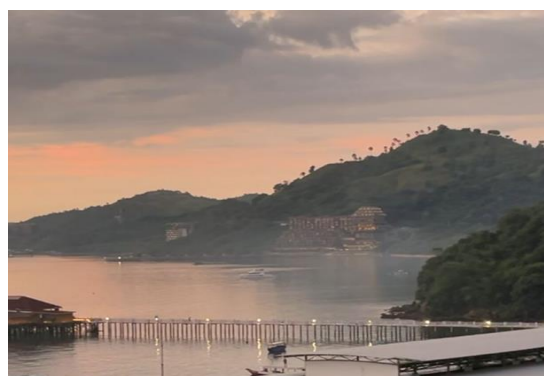


Figure 5. Taaktana hotels building

Source : Author's Documentation



Figure 6. Taaktana Hotels Entrance Gate

Source : Author's Documentation



Figure 7. Taaktana Hotels from afar, at night

Source : Author's Documentation



Figure 8. Katamaran Hotel Entrance Gate

Source : Author's Documentation



Figure 9. Katamaran Hotel Buildings

Source : Author's Documentation



This trend toward elite-oriented infrastructure is occurring alongside persistent water shortages in several parts of Labuan Bajo. For instance, in TPI (*Tempat Pelelangan Ikan*) *Kampung Ujung* and surround, residents have reported ongoing difficulties in accessing clean water due to distribution prioritization that disproportionately favors hotel districts and tourism zones. As documented by Floresa (2025), this water crisis reflects the deepening inequality in access to essential resources within what has been designated a “super premium tourism zone”. Thus, while coastal developments like Ta’aktana and Katamaran symbolize prestige and modern tourism branding, they also spotlight a growing disconnect between tourism-led growth and local well-being, especially in basic service provision like water.

Figure 10. Tempat Pelelangan Ikan, Kampung Tengah

Source : Author’s Documentation

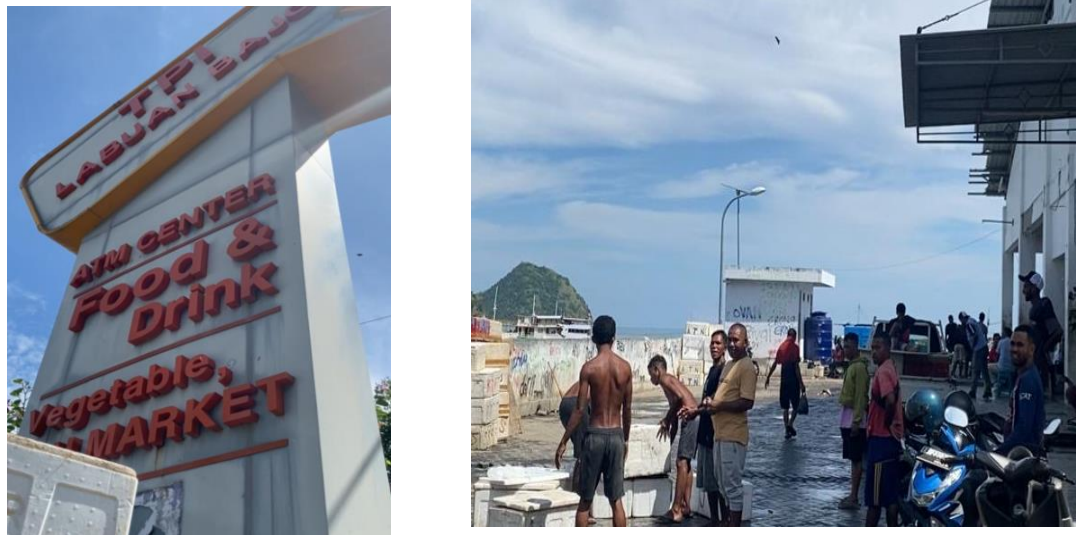


Figure 11. TPI activities during afternoon

Source : Author’s Documentation



At the center of these concerns is the expansion of tourism infrastructure without corresponding environmental safeguards. Hotel and resort construction along sensitive coastal zones has shown increased significantly in recent years. Large-scale infrastructure projects funded or promoted by private or state-owned enterprises, such as those under *InJourney*, are often branded as “eco-resorts” or “green hotels.”. Yet in many cases, these developments contribute to increased water and energy demand, and local displacement.

The ASEAN Summit 2023 served as a catalyst for accelerated infrastructure development in Labuan Bajo, particularly led by *InJourney*. One of their major projects includes the establishment of a large-scale conference facility and luxury resort in Golomori, a remote, elevated coastal area designated as a new venue for international tourism and high-level diplomatic events. InJourney’s representative confirmed this initiative, stating :

“Our short-term goal is to build a hotel in Golomori. That’s in a year, maybe years to come. Hopefully it will happen.”

While the location was selected for its panoramic appeal and prestige, community members and observers have raised concerns about the long-term feasibility and environmental suitability of building on elevated terrain with limited infrastructure. Constructing high-end resorts on steep land not only poses challenges for water supply, sewage management, and transport access but also risks ecological degradation and excessive maintenance costs.

This finding confirms on overtourism, such as by Seraphin et al. (2018), which argues that unchecked tourism growth in fragile destinations can lead to environmental degradation and local resistance. It also aligns with Gossling and Hall (2006) critique that infrastructure-centric development often precedes sustainability planning in Global South contexts.

Theoretically, this shows that tourism planning does not strategically integrate sustainability, especially when investments put image-making ahead of environmental reasoning (Hall, 2010). The term “green destination” runs the risk of turning into a type of performative sustainability, in which extensive projects are defended using general sustainability language without quantifiable ecological baselines or mitigation strategies. These worries are heightened by Golomori’s elevation and remote location, as the area is heavily dependent on resource-intensive development and lacks pre-existing infrastructure. Such developments

may also displace or circumvent community-led initiatives that are more rooted in environmental stewardship, and they frequently do not include local voices in the design phase (Lekakis & Dragouni, 2020; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017).

The situation in Labuan Bajo calls into question optimistic policy narratives that portray tourism infrastructure as an easy way to achieve regional prosperity. Instead, it demonstrates how infrastructure growth can worsen ecological risk and social exclusion in the absence of integrated spatial planning and environmental limits. These planning decisions carry important ramifications. Destinations like Labuan Bajo run the risk of becoming overdeveloped and environmentally vulnerable if tourism infrastructure is still shaped by high-level promotional agendas rather than ecologically conscious and community-driven frameworks.. The costs of maintaining resorts and conference facilities in Golomori could outweigh the benefits, especially in a region facing water scarcity, inconsistent electricity supply, and fragile coastal ecosystems. As part of a long-term strategy, stakeholders should adopt carrying capacity principles (Santos & Brilha, 2023), conduct independent environmental impact assessments, and explore low-impact, culturally integrated development models. Without these safeguards, Labuan Bajo's infrastructure boom may lead to underutilized facilities, ecological stress, and social tensions that undermining the very sustainability narrative it seeks to uphold.

As one of the participants, a conservation activist which he preferred to be *Anonymous*, mention that, this is just a time bomb waiting. He particularly said:

"I can't say anything, Labuan Bajo has been destroyed, it has been operating too large-scale. We are just waiting for extinction, if there is anything that can be done, it is only to slow it down. Because what happened in Labuan Bajo, several locations in the south of Labuan Bajo will become a hotel area (Golomori). I just said this is just waiting for a time bomb."

In terms of infrastructure quality, stakeholders frequently mentioned the paradox of "world-class" tourism aspirations versus basic service deficiencies. Waste management systems are underdeveloped, with solid waste accumulating in rivers and coastal areas. Water access is uneven, and sometimes communities still struggle to access the basic sanitation. While sustainability goals are articulated at the national level, there is insufficient investment in the foundational infrastructure needed to support actual environmental resilience, such as water management, renewable energy, waste system and ecosystem restoration. The conservation activist (*Anonymous*) add :

"If there is no guest support, hundreds of phinisi ships, maybe around 200 ships from

Labuan Bajo towards Padar Island while they are anchoring, they should make sure their anchors are not rusty. That's something I have lost hope.”

Practically, this calls for the urgent integration of carrying capacity studies, environmental impact assessments, and community consultation in future tourism planning. Without these tools, Labuan Bajo risks undermining the very natural and cultural assets it seeks to promote. As UNWTO (2018) emphasizes, tourism must operate within ecological boundaries to remain viable and resilient.

In conclusion, the current trajectory of infrastructure development in Labuan Bajo reflects a tension between ambition and accountability. While the intention to support sustainable tourism is commendable, the lack of environmental governance, social safeguards, and participatory planning means that infrastructure risks becoming a tool of exclusion and environmental harm, rather than resilience and equity.

4.1.5 The Missing Link: Sustainable Funding Mechanism

Although sustainability has emerged as a key topic in discussions about tourism, Labuan Bajo's development agenda still barely incorporates climate finance and sustainable funding sources. There is no clear plan to use climate finance tools like carbon credits, blue economy bonds, or payment for ecosystem services (PES), despite the region's ecological significance as home to coral ecosystems, endangered marine species, and coastal carbon sinks. This absence is a significant lost opportunity, especially as global funding moves toward promoting climate-resilient development and nature-based solutions. Interviews with policy actors and NGO stakeholders revealed that, although there is growing awareness of climate-linked funding opportunities, the capacity to access and manage such mechanisms is extremely limited. As Mr. Ludgerius Minus noted:

“Ya, I know about green bonds, but I think we need the consultant (Yayasan Komodo) to come here again.”

Also, there is not yet any sustainable development fee, such as eco-tax, conservation fees, that linked the payment to conservation treatment and for the carbon emissions fees. As Mr. Hendrikus Rani Siga, the Head of Komodo National Park said :

“No, we have not established that. But, if it is implement, it will be great.”

This statement reflects a broader institutional gap: green finance in Indonesia remains heavily centralized, with little technical assistance or policy support for region implementation. Moreover, Labuan Bajo lacks the baseline environmental data and MRV

(Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification) systems necessary to comply with international climate finance standards. This reality confirms existing critiques in the literature regarding the “symbolic adoption” of sustainability goals in tourism without the accompanying financial systems to support them (Ruhanen et al., 2017 ; Gössling et al., 2019). Furthermore, the absence of financial innovation in a destination marketed globally for its natural capital contradicts Indonesia’s policy narratives that suggest tourism is aligned with green growth pathways. Instead, the gap between branding and budget-readiness reveals a deeper structural issue: sustainability is being performed, not institutionalized. Similarly, PES schemes require clear valuation of ecosystem services (e.g., biodiversity, water quality, coral reefs), which are currently unquantified or fragmented across different agencies.

From an academic perspective, this aligns with Becken and Dolnicar (2010) who argue that without systemic financial architecture, green tourism remains aspirational rather than actionable. Moreover, the current lack of data infrastructure (as highlighted in Section 4.2) which is a core requirement for participating in climate finance schemes such as blue carbon initiatives or voluntary carbon markets for accessing voluntary carbon finance (UNDP, 2023).

In Labuan Bajo, interviews with officials and NGO leaders reveal growing awareness of climate finance mechanisms. However, there is little progress in institutionalizing these tools at the local level. Labuan Bajo lacks the technical infrastructure to quantify carbon baselines or ecosystem service values. As Mr. Frans Teguh (BPOLBF) explained, *“...nationally the data has not been validated properly. Once we commit to carbon, every year we need to have progress, how far the reporting, verification, this sector must be prepared., cannot be made alone, must be a national scheme.”* (Teguh, 2025).

Even one of the state-own enterprises, Injourney, clearly stated that they have not implement any sustainable finance such as carbon tax into their hotels operations. As their representative said :

“This is still our initial plan. It might be appropriate to talk with another department too, because it's not in me. But we are still in the early stages of looking at the possibility of, for example, doing zero carbon in some of our assets. Our assets are many. For example, in airports, we have 37 airports in Indonesia, the carbon must be extraordinary. I think it will be very difficult for us to do zero carbon. But there are some of our assets such as in Taman Mini, in hotels in Denpasar, in Sanur, in Nusa 2, especially in the Sanur health area, it is very possible for us to do net zero carbon. This is what we have to do and

this is also very important for our branding. We see this as very important, because when we can brand our hotel as net zero carbon, then we can increase the selling price of the hotel.”

One of the most promising yet underexplored opportunities in Labuan Bajo is the implementation of a green carbon tax system targeted at the hospitality sector. Hotels, especially those built on ecologically sensitive areas or higher elevations like *Golomori*, contribute significantly to energy consumption, waste, and carbon emissions. As sustainable tourism gains traction globally, there is a growing shift toward polluter-pays principles, where businesses with high environmental footprints contribute to local conservation funds or carbon offset schemes (Becken & Hay, 2007).

This model has precedent. In the Maldives and Palau, environmental levies on hotel rooms are used to finance marine conservation and sustainable infrastructure. If applied in Labuan Bajo, such a mechanism could generate funding to support community-led waste management, clean water initiatives, mangrove restoration, or cultural conservation programs. It would also push hotel operators toward green building certifications, incentivizing the use of energy-efficient systems and water-saving designs.

As Taraniuk et al. (2023) argue, destinations that attract sustainable investment tend to have three elements: environmental accountability systems, inclusive governance, and mechanisms that translate local needs into fundable strategies. Without these, even well-intentioned development can lead to greenwashing which promoting sustainability rhetorically while delivering little environmental or social return.

To succeed, this approach would require coordination between the Ministry of Tourism, West Manggarai District, and industry associations to establish a legal framework and transparent fund governance. To bridge this financial gap, a localized financial innovation strategy is urgently needed. This could include blended finance models, the launch of destination-specific green bonds, tourism-linked carbon credits, or participation in Indonesia’s SDG Financing Hub. But these tools require the foundational work of developing accurate data, institutional capacity, and regulatory support which none of them currently exist in Labuan Bajo. Without this, the destination risks reinforcing what Caruana et al. (2014) describe as “sustainability-washing”, where projects are branded as green but lack the structures to deliver impact. Importantly, such a system should be linked to incentives, such as hotels that meet emission reduction targets or contribute to verified carbon offsets could receive green tourism labels, tax reductions, or marketing advantages.

4.1.6 Local Aspirations and Sustainable Futures

Beyond institutional frameworks and sustainability jargon, the heart of Labuan Bajo's tourism future lies in the aspirations of its people, the communities whose lands, waters, and cultures have shaped the region for generations. Interviews with village leaders in Labuan Bajo reveal a deep desire for a model of tourism that is not only economically beneficial but also culturally respectful, environmentally just, and socially inclusive.

As the chief of Kampung Ujung, Mr. Supandril expressed,

"We are not against tourism. But we want tourism that pays attention to us, not just building luxury hotels for guests".

This reflects a widespread sentiment: tourism is welcomed as a source of income and opportunity, but its current form often feels disconnected from local distribution. This also contradicts dominant development models that treat local communities as passive recipients of top-down tourism plans. The current Labuan Bajo roadmap shaped largely by state-owned enterprises, national ministries, and private sector actors that lacks mechanisms for participatory governance or community involvement. This reflects what Salazar (2012) calls "development without voice", in which communities are visible in marketing but invisible in policymaking. This sentiment highlights the need to re-center indigenous and local knowledge systems in defining what sustainability means. For many, sustainability is not captured in environmental reports or policy frameworks, but in the daily practices of land stewardship, ritual, and intergenerational teaching.

Academically, this reinforces arguments from post-development theorists (Escobar, 1995; Chambers, 1997) that sustainable change cannot be engineered without honoring local knowledge, priorities, and timeframes. It also adds to the emerging literature on *aspirational governance*, which views community futures not as vague desires, but as strategic tools for rethinking tourism design (Hollinshead, 2009). To support these aspirations, Labuan Bajo requires a participatory planning platform that centers indigenous knowledge, intergenerational equity, and local economic sovereignty. These visions should not be treated as "soft inputs" to be filtered by experts, but as core design elements in destination development. This is especially critical in post-COVID recovery, where there is a global push that argued by Lekakis and Dragouni (2022) to rethink tourism through more democratic, place-based governance models. Importantly, sustainability to many locals also includes basic rights and services: clean water, waste management, housing, education, and health care. As one of the health workers in Labuan Bajo, said:

“We hope that there will be children from Komodo Village itself who can serve and be responsible (in the health sector) in their area, without having to depend on our human resources in the city.”

From the interview, Komodo village just established their own community health center this early year. Whereas, they have been no health centre at their island. Until now, the health workers are fulfilled by people from the city of Labuan Bajo, they are working in shift. Without addressing these foundational issues, any sustainability narrative remains incomplete. A chief of *Desa Komodo* (Komodo village), Mr, Achsan said,

“We need hospitality to receive guests. And also, be able to provide an understanding, an overview of our village. Then, if it does work later, Ma'am, what will we build by ourselves? We can do it without assistance from the central government. So, no matter how beautiful our village people say, no matter what, if it turns out that the villages are not well maintained, it will be the same. Like that, so, I think, if they have fulfilled it and paid attention, then the money will come in by itself. So, I think, how many villages are there in Komodo now, So I said, the ones who can build the village are us ourselves. I mean, capacity building”

These aspirations are not naive; they are rooted in real-world awareness of the challenges Labuan Bajo faces. But they are also visionary, calling for a re-imagining of tourism as a collaborative project, where community wellbeing is not a secondary concern, but the very foundation of sustainability.

Tourism carrying capacity is defined as the maximum number of visitors that a destination can accommodate without causing unacceptable alterations to the physical environment, a decline in visitor satisfaction, or adverse impacts on the local community (Yusoh et al., 2021). This multifaceted concept encompasses several dimensions on physical-ecological capacity which refers to the threshold beyond which environmental degradation occurs, such as habitat destruction or resource depletion (Santos & Brilha, 2023). Social Capacity, that pertains to the extent to which local communities can tolerate tourism-related activities without experiencing social stress or cultural erosion (Saveriades, 2000). Lastly, economic capacity involves the ability of the local economy to benefit from tourism without leading to inflation or the displacement of traditional livelihoods (Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

A participatory approach is required to implement carrying capacity frameworks, involving local stakeholders in decision-making. This cooperative approach makes sure that tourism growth is in line with local values and environmental preservation objectives.

Additionally, it improves the efficacy and sustainability of tourism initiatives by giving locals a sense of ownership (Saarinen, 2006). This view is in line with the idea of tourism carrying capacity, which provides a crucial framework for striking a balance between the expansion of tourism and the maintenance of the environment, society, and economy.

In order to ensure sustainability, carrying capacity assessments must be incorporated into tourism planning, according to recent studies. For example, Firmansyah et al. (2023) modelled the carrying capacity of Komodo and Padar Islands using a system dynamics approach. They estimated that Komodo Island can handle up to 219,000 visitors annually, while Padar Island can handle about 39,420 visitors annually. Overstepping these limits may result in environmental damage and adverse effects on the habitat of Komodo dragons. Haribudiman et al. (2023) also emphasized the importance of carrying capacity in creating sustainable tourism destinations, stressing that long-term environmental preservation and community well-being depend on an awareness and adherence to these limits.

4.2 Findings to Action: Strategic Directions for Sustainable Tourism

The six main findings from previous sections of this study directly inform the strategic directions described for this section. These findings highlight long-standing issues that continue to impede Labuan Bajo's transition to sustainable tourism, such as funding gaps, infrastructure pressures, cultural marginalization, stakeholder fragmentation, and misaligned local aspirations. When combined, they show how urgently integrated responses are needed. Based on information obtained from semi-structured interviews, field observations, and a document, the suggested directions provide evidence-based guidance for resolving fundamental problems and advancing more inclusive, environmentally conscious, and culturally based tourism governance.

4.2.1 Addressing Root Causes of Stakeholder and Systemic Gaps

The findings from section 4.1 revealed that the governance of tourism in Labuan Bajo is marked by stakeholder fragmentation and systemic inefficiencies. There is no unified governance mechanism to efficiently coordinate the activities of the various actors, including ministries, state-owned businesses, conservation authorities, and local governments. Fragmented planning and a lack of coherence in policy have been caused by overlapping mandates, uneven policy implementation, and inadequate horizontal and vertical coordination. Designing and implementing long-term sustainability strategies has become challenging due to this fragmented institutional landscape.

An integrated system for monitoring the effects of tourism on infrastructure, biodiversity, community well-being, and cultural integrity does not yet exist. There are significant obstacles to evidence-based policymaking because the data that is available is frequently fragmented, out-of-date, or unavailable. The dearth of easily accessible, centralized data systems that could guide strategic choices or promote public accountability was a recurring theme among interviewees. Tourism development stays reactive and disengaged from more general sustainability objectives in the absence of clear benchmarks and performance indicators.

Establishing a cogent and inclusive governance architecture is essential to overcoming these fundamental obstacles. Clarifying institutional responsibilities, facilitating consistent monitoring and planning, and offering a formal space for agency collaboration are all possible with a multi-stakeholder coordination platform. In order to facilitate coordinated planning and institutional alignment, recent research on sustainable tourism governance highlights the significance of cooperative, multi-stakeholder platforms that unite representatives of the public and private sectors as well as community-based organizations (Ratner et al., 2022). These platforms help clarify responsibilities, reduce duplication of mandates, and improve communication across levels of governance.

Concurrently, it has been demonstrated that incorporating sustainability indicators into the tourism development agenda improves accountability, encourages long-term planning, and supports evidence-based decision-making. When developed collaboratively, such indicators not only measure performance but also encourage learning, dialogue, and transparency among stakeholders (Cesarini & Terraglia, 2024). In Labuan Bajo, creating a locally based sustainability index would offer a tangible instrument for tracking advancement, assessing the results of policies, and directing adaptive governance.

4.2.2 Prioritizing Ecological Protection to Guide Capacity Limits

The study's findings highlight a number of important conflicts, including the growing pressure that unchecked tourism expansion is placing on Labuan Bajo's natural ecosystems, especially in the Komodo National Park region. Concerns regarding coral reef degradation, solid waste buildup in isolated tourist destinations, and freshwater scarcity during peak seasons were consistently reported in field observations and interviews with conservation stakeholders. Infrastructure-driven tourism development, which frequently ignores the destination's ecological carrying capacity, exacerbates these environmental pressures.

The park's ecological thresholds are not sufficiently taken into consideration by current

visitor management strategies, and environmental protections are not strictly enforced despite the area's protected status. Many respondents were worried that conservation goals have been subordinated to the commodification of nature brought about by positioning Labuan Bajo as a high-end travel destination. It is challenging to quantify the combined effects of construction, tourism, and related activities on delicate ecosystems in the absence of a strong environmental monitoring system.

To reverse these trends, ecological protection must be repositioned as a guiding principle in tourism development planning. This entails integrating clear carrying capacity limits into tourism regulations, especially for ecologically fragile zones such as coral reefs, Komodo habitats, and marine reserves. Capacity-based planning ensures that development does not exceed the natural resilience of the environment, while still allowing for controlled tourism benefits. As emphasized in several sustainability studies, such limits must be locally defined, evidence-based, and periodically reassessed (Coccossis & Mexa, 2004 ; Dredge & Jamal, 2015).

Additionally, collaborative management frameworks such as co-management models between park authorities, local communities, and tour operators can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of conservation policies. Such approaches allow for more context-sensitive enforcement, local ownership, and the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge in tourism governance (Jamal & Stronza, 2009 ; Shokirov et al. 2021).

4.2.3 Strengthening Economic Benefits through Local Empowerment

While tourism development in Labuan Bajo has attracted national investment and infrastructure expansion, its economic benefits have not been equitably distributed among local communities. Field interviews revealed that many residents, especially those outside of formal tourism circuits, continue to experience limited access to economic opportunities. Rising living costs, real estate speculation, and the dominance of large-scale tourism actors have further marginalized community members from participating meaningfully in the tourism value chain.

The structural obstacles that keep local actors from competing in the tourism economy are a major limitation. Many locals run small, unofficial businesses like traditional restaurants, souvenir shops, homestays, and transportation services, but they lack the institutional backing, financial resources, and technical know-how needed to expand or formalize their operations. Unfair access to networks and procurement channels, which are frequently monopolized by private or state-owned operators, exacerbates these restrictions.

In order to solve this, planning for sustainable tourism must prioritize increasing local economic participation. Empowering micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs), which are the backbone of many local communities' economies, is one of the best ways to achieve this. Targeted policies like digital literacy initiatives, preferential procurement programs, entrepreneurial training, and microfinance access are necessary to empower MSMEs. Locally based tourism economies are more inclusive, resilient, and likely to hold onto their value within the destination, as the literature has shown (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017).

Financial access and regulatory inclusion are only two aspects of empowering local participation. Initiatives to increase capacity are crucial for giving local actors the information, abilities, and resources they need to prosper in a cutthroat tourism market. This covers technical instruction in marketing, digital skills, sustainable practices, hospitality standards, and business management. In order for community-based organizations and cooperatives to participate more successfully in policy discussions and destination governance, it is equally critical to support their organizational growth and leadership development. By increasing this local capacity, Labuan Bajo's tourism model can be made more sustainable and ensure that economic inclusion is not merely symbolic or transient (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

To guarantee that local businesses are incorporated into official tourism supply chains, institutional mechanisms must be established in addition to capacity-building. In order to create equitable market access and incubation spaces, this entails improved coordination between business chambers, local government organizations, and private sector partners. By doing this, Labuan Bajo can advance toward a more diverse tourism industry that preserves the area's cultural heritage while also sustaining livelihoods.

4.2.4 Reconciling Destination Branding with Ecosystem Conservation

Destination branding strategies, especially those that present Labuan Bajo as a "super priority tourism destination" and the entry point to Komodo National Park, have had a significant influence on the growth of the island's tourism industry. Coral reefs, endemic species, and picturesque landscapes are examples of natural assets that have been repackaged primarily as commercial tourism products, contributing to the commodification of nature even though such branding has been successful in drawing in investment and visitor flows. The conservation stakeholders surveyed for this study expressed concern about this strategy since it frequently puts market appeal ahead of environmental resilience.

According to field data, there is increasing conflict between the state's attempts to market Labuan Bajo as a posh, internationally competitive travel destination and the pressing need to protect the Komodo ecosystem's ecological integrity. A number of respondents pointed out that conservation planning has been overshadowed by the focus on infrastructure development and image-building, with little connection between branding goals and biodiversity preservation. Furthermore, efforts to promote tourism usually neglect environmental management duties, which leads to disjointed strategies and ambiguous accountability.

Destination branding needs to be in line with environmental sustainability principles in order to close this gap. This entails redefining Labuan Bajo's brand identity to emphasize ecological boundaries, cultural authenticity, and conservation values rather than just exclusivity and luxury. Including conservation narratives in the branding strategy can increase public awareness, draw in ethical travelers, and provide tourism operators with reputational incentives to comply with environmental regulations (Becken & Job, 2014; Job et al., 2017). According to Rhama (2023), national parks only acquire a competitive edge when their branding reflects distinctive natural features and conservation pledges. Conservation-focused certification programs and narratives can raise visitor awareness and promote ethical behavior. It is crucial for both ecological integrity and the destination's long-term competitiveness to balance conservation objectives with destination branding. The ability of Labuan Bajo to genuinely strike a balance between environmental stewardship and visitor experience will determine its future appeal as global tourism markets grow more focused on sustainability.

4.2.5 Integrating Culture, Biodiversity and Local Livelihoods

In order to effectively promote sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo, cultural identity, biodiversity preservation, and local livelihoods must all be integrated. The ecological significance of Labuan Bajo, which is home to Komodo dragons and delicate marine ecosystems, is intricately linked to its cultural diversity, which is based on Manggarai customs. Current tourism models, however, frequently treat these areas independently, which leads to ecological degradation and community marginalization.

Results from observations and interviews indicate that Labuan Bajo's tourism industry usually ignores local opinions, with infrastructure choices and environmental regulations imposed without adequate consultation. Effective sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo requires that local livelihoods, biodiversity preservation, and cultural heritage be viewed as

intricately intertwined areas. The benefits of tourism are frequently disentangled from local livelihoods related to fishing, weaving, and hospitality, and environmental regulations often neglect to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge or community perspectives. This misalignment erodes ecological resilience in addition to cultural identity.

To empower the local community, creative models are required. For example, the ability of ecotourism centered around fishing to connect the preservation of biodiversity with the prosperity of the local economy. According to this Bangladeshi study, small-scale fishing communities benefit from ecotourism initiatives by strengthening ecological stewardship, increasing their adaptive capacity, and gaining alternative sources of income (Uddin et al., 2021). This strategy integrates livelihood assistance, tourism, and environmental education in a framework that is inclusive of all social groups.

Previous research has also demonstrated how well community-based tourism (CBT) aligns local livelihood improvement with biodiversity conservation. For example, Gidebo (2023) shows that when CBT provides sustainable livelihood alternatives while promoting conservation goals, communities in Ethiopia that are adjacent to protected areas exhibit positive attitudes toward tourism. This study emphasizes how, when developed cooperatively, CBT can serve as a tool for both poverty alleviation and ecosystem preservation.

The idea of biocultural ecotourism is presented by Echeverri et al. (2025), who show that when planning is intentional and inclusive, areas with significant biodiversity and cultural diversity can both draw environmentally conscious tourists and strengthen local communities. Cultural heritage tourism demonstrates how important cultural events and artistic practices—like rituals, traditional crafts, and group performances—are to promoting sustainable place-based

4.2.6 Enhancing Sustainable Finance Confidence through Sustainability Governance

To boost investment confidence in Labuan Bajo's tourism industry, sustainability governance must be strengthened. According to interviews and document reviews, there are still issues with unclear regulations, disjointed coordination, and a lack of clear sustainability data, all of which can put investors off and increase financial risk.

Innovative financing options for conservation, such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) models, are made possible by integrating trustworthy governance frameworks. One well-known example from around the world is the Simanjoro Conservation Easement in

Tanzania, where local communities consented to refrain from farming on priority grasslands in exchange for yearly payments from tourism stakeholders. Through a widely acknowledged conservation-business partnership, this model effectively connected local livelihoods, wildlife protection, and tourism revenue (Baird et al., 2009). These arrangements show how PES mechanisms can harmonize investor and community interests with ecological goals when they are managed openly and cooperatively. Additionally, tourist destinations with established ESG baselines and data frameworks are increasingly able to access climate finance tools like resilience funds, blue carbon offsets, and green bonds (UN & UNWTO, 2025).

Labuan Bajo needs to enact a number of reforms in order to be prepared for investment. In order to supervise sustainability planning, define stakeholder roles, and guarantee accountability, it is first essential to establish an open multi-stakeholder governance body. Second, the creation of a baseline data set for Labuan Bajo would allow for regular monitoring of important metrics like waste management, community well-being, and biodiversity health. Third, successful PES cases in Tanzania show that formalizing Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanisms and getting ready for climate finance tools like green bonds or blue carbon credits can match conservation objectives with financial incentives (Baird et al., 2009). Fourth, SMEs and community-based tourism organizations in particular will be empowered, signaling inclusive growth—a factor that ethical investors are becoming more and more interested in.

Lastly, Labuan Bajo's resilience and reputation as a sustainable travel destination will be strengthened by controlling the ecological impact of tourism by implementing carrying capacity restrictions and incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into planning. Research from around the world continuously demonstrates the value of TEK in promoting community resilience and biodiversity protection. Indigenous TEK, for example, offers accurate, long-term ecological insight into threatened plant species knowledge that is frequently more thorough and economical than traditional scientific monitoring methods, as shown by a study on *Anaphalis javanica* in Indonesia's Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park (Susanto et al., 2014).

In conclusion, even though Labuan Bajo has a lot of potential for investment, this can only be realized by shifting from a growth-oriented paradigm to one that is based on strong sustainability governance. To gain the trust of investors and draw in long-term, ethical funding, institutions must improve their ecological stewardship, accountability, and transparency.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The impact of stakeholder collaboration on the development of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, was investigated in this study. The results show that, despite the existence of collaboration in theory, its application is still dispersed because there are no common planning frameworks. Local perspectives are frequently underrepresented in decision-making, and environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and economic objectives are still not adequately balanced. In order to preserve cultural customs and improve the authenticity of tourism, community empowerment is essential. However, systemic problems like a lack of baseline data, restricted access to sustainable funding, and inadequate monitoring systems impede the development of inclusive and green tourism. The study demonstrates that while stakeholder, collaboration, capacity building, tripple bottom line, and carrying capacity theories provide useful direction, coordination, shared accountability, and institutional support are necessary for real-world results. Without these, Labuan Bajo runs the risk of achieving symbolic sustainability as opposed to revolutionary change. There is an urgent need for a tourism model that is inclusive, data-driven, and culturally grounded. To make sure that tourism becomes a source of resilience rather than disruption, this strategy should prioritize long-term planning, equitable funding, and community involvement.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

Building on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed to support the realization of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo. These recommendations aim to address the key challenges identified, namely governance fragmentation, lack of data infrastructure, weak stakeholder inclusion, and risks of cultural commodification. They are designed to align with Indonesia's national sustainability goals while strengthening local capacities and ensuring that tourism development benefits both people and the environment. Each recommendation corresponds to the research objectives and offers practical steps toward achieving a more inclusive, accountable, and resilient tourism governance framework.

1. Establish an Integrated Tourism Governance Framework

Create a multi-stakeholder governance body that includes representatives from government, indigenous communities, NGOs, tourism operators, and conservationists. This body should co-develop a unified sustainability roadmap for Labuan Bajo that ensures equity, transparency, and accountability.

2. Develop a Sustainable Financing Mechanism

Initiate blended finance schemes, including carbon offset credits, blue carbon programs, and green bonds, to fund conservation and cultural programs. Local government and state-owned enterprises, such as InJourney should facilitate access to international climate finance through capacity-building and partnership development.

3. Institutionalize Baseline Data Systems

Implement a centralized data collection and monitoring system to track environmental indicators (e.g., biodiversity, emissions, waste), socio-cultural impacts (e.g., participation, gender equity), and economic contributions. This will enable evidence-based policy and better positioning for global funding programs. Furthermore, further research on carrying capacity is urgently needed.

4. Protect Cultural Integrity through Participatory Cultural Governance

Formulate cultural tourism guidelines that involve customary leaders and cultural practitioners in defining what, how, and when traditions are presented to tourists. Prevent the over-commercialization of rituals and ensure fair compensation for cultural contributions.

5. Mainstream Capacity Building for Stakeholders

Provide consistent training and education in sustainable tourism management, environmental stewardship, digital marketing, and sustainable business models to empower local communities to take ownership of tourism initiatives.

5.3 Recommendations Pathway to Sustainable Tourism in Labuan Bajo

In a Theory of Change, author's mapping a pathway from the current reality (the "as-is") toward the desired future state. The recommendations grounded in what's happening now, based on the findings of this thesis. This theory of change identified through stakeholder interviews and field observations. These conditions include fragmented governance, limited baseline environmental data, weak access to climate finance, and the marginalization of women and indigenous communities. Rather than proposing abstract or idealized strategies, the outputs and innovations in this roadmap are designed to address

these structural realities. The pathway from “as-is” relies on measurable interventions such as establishing a centralized MRV system, integrating community voices into formal planning processes, and enabling sustainable finance mechanisms through capacity-building. By aligning proposed strategies with current gaps and institutional capacities, this Theory of Change presents a realistic and actionable model for achieving inclusive, sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo. The details and proposed visualisation of Theory of Change can be found in Appendix 6.

5.4 Research Limitations

While this study provides critical insights into the role of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism, it is not without limitations:

- **Scope and Generalizability:** The study focuses exclusively on Labuan Bajo and may not fully capture dynamics in other tourism destinations in Indonesia. Caution should be exercised in generalizing findings beyond this context.
- **Data Constraints:** Due to the lack of standardized or accessible baseline environmental and socio-economic data, some findings rely heavily on stakeholder perceptions rather than empirical metrics.
- **Temporal Constraints:** Fieldwork was conducted over a limited period, which may not reflect seasonal variations or long-term trends in tourism impact and stakeholder behaviour.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Comparison Table : Sustainable Tourism in Bhutan, Bali, Labuan Bajo

Dimension	Criteria & Details	Bhutan	Bali	Labuan Bajo
Tourism Policy Model	A clear national vision or control mechanism on tourism volume and development direction.	 Follows “High Value, Low Volume” strategy guided by Gross National Happiness (GNH) principles (Isachsen, 2024; Madden-Nadeau, 2023)	 Open mass tourism model, limited control on tourist numbers (<i>Cole, 2012</i>)	 Designated as SPTD but governance lacks clear strategic coordination (<i>Fatina et al., 2023; Suharyanto et al., 2024</i>)
Carrying Capacity	Formal environmental or social carrying capacity in tourism zones.	 Visitor caps and park access limits enforced to protect ecological integrity (Madden-Nadeau, 2023)	 Tourism exceeds capacity, contributing to degradation (<i>Gössling & Hall, 2006</i>)	 No formalized limits; marine and land zones under pressure (<i>Riswanto et al., 2025</i>)
Environmental Protection	Integration of biodiversity and habitat protection into tourism regulation.	 Constitutional protection of 60% forest cover and regulated zones (The Tourism Rules & Regulations Bhutan, 2022)	 Environmental laws exist, but enforcement is weak (<i>Pusparani & Fandeli, 2018</i>)	 Komodo Park regulated by national body, but pressure from mass tourism growing (<i>Hidyarko et al., 2021</i>)

Plastic Regulation	Formal restrictions or bans on single-use plastics.	 Nationwide ban on single-use plastic since 1999 (Madden-Nadeau, 2023)	 No effective policy; plastic pollution widespread in coastal areas (<i>Prajnawrdhi, 2021</i>)	 Rampant use in tourist zones; limited waste infrastructure (<i>Fatina et al., 2023</i>)
Carbon-Neutral Strategy	National or destination-level low-carbon or carbon-neutral tourism roadmap.	 Tourism revenue (SDF) partly supports offsetting and carbon reduction (Isachsen, 2024)	 No carbon tracking mechanisms; carbon-intensive infrastructure (<i>IEA, 2022</i>)	 No active low-carbon strategy despite emissions pressure (<i>UNEP & UNWTO, 2005</i>)
Community Participation	Involvement of locals in tourism planning, ownership, and decision-making.	 Locals manage homestays, participate in governance, and receive direct economic benefits (Madden-Nadeau, 2023)	 Some community tourism exists but often marginalized by commercial operators (<i>Achiba, 2018</i>)	 Locals excluded from core planning, mostly as service labor (<i>Islahuddin et al., 2022; Erb, 2015</i>)
Cultural Preservation	Integration of intangible heritage and local tradition in tourism.	 Tourism revolves around spiritual sites, dzongs, and cultural heritage (Madden-Nadeau, 2023)	 Culture commodified through performances; loss of authenticity (<i>Richards & Munsters, 2010</i>)	 Cultural elements visible but often overshadowed by branding as “luxury ecotourism” (<i>Salazar, 2012; Allegretti, 2015</i>)

Infrastructure Sustainability	Sustainable planning for waste, water, and energy systems.	 Controlled tourism avoids strain on basic utilities (The Druk Journal, 2019)	 High pressure on water supply, sanitation, and traffic (Cole, 2012; Prajnawrdhi, 2021)	 Tourism outpaced basic infrastructure; marine pollution rising (Fatina et al., 2023)
Green Finance	Adoption of green bonds, ESG-linked loans, or eco-funding for tourism SMEs.	 Bhutan's SUSTOUR program offers low-carbon tourism finance and capacity building (The Tourism Rules Bhutan, 2022)	 No formal mechanisms for green investment in tourism (Taraniuk et al., 2023)	 Proposals exist (e.g., green bonds, climate funds) but not operational (Sianipar et al., 2024)
Tourist Filtering	Pricing or policy filters to attract environmentally conscious tourists.	 USD 100/day Sustainable Development Fee deters mass tourists (Isachsen, 2024)	No pricing control; budget and backpacker segments dominate (UNWTO, 2020)	 Entry is unrestricted; Komodo Park pricing debate ongoing (Hidyarko et al., 2021)
Governance Coordination	Multi-level collaboration among government, private sector, NGOs, and communities.	 Bhutan Tourism Council ensures national-local synergy (Madden-Nadeau, 2023)	 Governance fragmented between regencies and central agencies (Gössling & Hall, 2006)	 Lack of coordination among SOEs, local government, and NGOs (Riswanto et al., 2025; Suharyanto et al., 2024)

Monitoring Indicators	Use of sustainability KPIs or impact measurement dashboards.	 Bhutan Tourism Council tracks KPIs and links them to GNH outcomes (Isachsen, 2024)	 No coordinated data collection or destination performance tracking (<i>UNWTO, 2020</i>)	 Indicators fragmented across institutions; no integrated dashboard (<i>Uzzo, 2013; Fatina et al., 2023</i>)
Disaster/Climate Resilience	Climate risk mitigation and preparedness integrated into tourism planning.	 Integrated into national policies and training for local operators (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005)	 Some emergency planning exists; overwhelmed by tourism volume (<i>IEA, 2022</i>)	 Climate risk not yet integrated into tourism policies (<i>Fatina et al., 2023</i>)

Notes :



: Available



: Not Available



: In Progress

Appendix 2. List of Interviewees

NO.	Name	Institution
GOVERNMENT		
1.	<i>Injourney</i>	<i>Anonymous</i>
2.	Pemerintah Daerah Manggarai Barat (Sekretaris)	Bapak Fransiskus Sales Sodo S,E
3.	Balai Taman Nasional Komodo (Kepala)	Bapak Hendrikus Rani Siga, S.Hut, M.Sc.
4.	Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores (BPOLBF)	Bapak Dr. Frans Teguh, M.A.,CHE,
NGO		
5.	Yayasan Komodo	Ibu Widya Djatiningrum
6.	Conservation Bodies	<i>Anonymous</i>
LOCAL COMMUNITY		
7.	Homestay Association Manggarai Barat	Bapak Ludgerius Minus
8.	Desa Komodo (Head of Village)	Bapak Achsan
9.	Kampung Melo (Chief Community)	Bapak Yosef Ugis
10.	Desa Kampung Air (Head of Village)	Bapak Supandril
11.	Health Workers	<i>Anonymous</i>

Appendix 3. Interviews Protocol

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Topic : Between Paradise and Pressure: Rethinking Sustainable Tourism in Labuan Bajo

1. Research Background

This research was conducted as part of a master's thesis, which focused on green tourism and sustainable tourism practices in Labuan Bajo. The aim of this research was to

understand how Injourney plays a key role in the tourism industry, contributing to the survival of Komodo dragons and the sustainable maintenance of the surrounding environment.

2. Interview Objectives

- Understand Injourney's role and strategies in tourism development in the Labuan Bajo area.
- Explore sustainability initiatives, including environmental preservation, biodiversity, and local cultural conservation.
- Analyze collaboration between Injourney and other stakeholders (government, local communities, and the private sector).
- Identify challenges and solutions in implementing sustainable tourism.

3. Interview Method

- Interview Type: Semi-structured (provides flexibility for deeper exploration).
- Duration: ±45-60 minutes.
- Interview format: Face-to-face or virtual (Zoom/Google Meet).
- Recording equipment: -Voice recorder (with the interviewee's permission)
-Written notes as backup

4. Interview Structure

The interview will be divided into five main sections:

1. Introduction → Introduction & interview consent.
2. Injourney's strategy & role in supporting sustainable tourism.
3. Implementation & tangible impact in Labuan Bajo.
4. Challenges and solutions in implementing sustainable tourism.
5. Closing → Additional clarification & thank you.

5. Technical Interview Preparation

1. Before the interview:

- Send a letter of permission for the interview and confirm the schedule.
- Prepare a list of main and optional questions for further exploration.

- Ensure the recording equipment is functioning properly and prepare backup equipment.
- Understand the background of InJourney and related projects in Labuan Bajo.

2. During the interview:

- Begin with a self-introduction and the purpose of the interview.
- Explain that the interviewee is free to answer or skip questions.
- Use polite, open, and professional language.

3. After the interview:

- Transcribe the interview to avoid missing important information.
- If clarification is needed, contact the interviewee by email or phone.
- Send a thank-you note to the interviewee.

Appendix 4. List of Interview Questions

INJOURNEY

1. InJourney's Role in in Labuan Bajo as Tourism Priority Destination

- What is InJourney preparing to ensure Labuan Bajo is a priority tourism destination? What are the commitments of travel agencies, airports, flights, and accommodation within the group?
- How does InJourney contribute to developing a sustainable tourism strategy in Labuan Bajo?

2. InJourney's Strategy in developmet of Labuan Bajo

- •What are InJourney's main programs or initiatives in developing Labuan Bajo as a sustainable tourism destination?
- How does InJourney collaborate with the local government, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry/Komodo National Park, the Ministry of Tourism, and InJourney and the West Manggarai Regional Government in managing and developing tourism in Labuan Bajo?
- How does InJourney's strategy maintain a balance between environmental preservation and economic growth from the tourism sector, as well as addressing waste issues resulting from the increase in visitors?

3. Tourism Infrastructure and Facilities Management

- Can you explain InJourney's role in managing key infrastructure in Labuan Bajo, such as the airport, trade center, tourist accommodations, and museums?
- What are the biggest challenges faced in improving tourism infrastructure in Labuan Bajo?
- Is there any involvement of the general public (including indigenous and Bajo tribes) in infrastructure development in Labuan Bajo's tourist areas?

4. Green Funding and Finance

- Does InJourney currently have access to green funding (such as municipal bonds/green finance) to develop sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo?
- Are there any approaches being taken to attract investors with a sustainable vision for tourism development in Labuan Bajo?

5. Conservation and Tourism Management on Komodo Island

- What is InJourney's strategy for supporting conservation on Komodo Island, given its status as a unique habitat that must be protected?
- How is tourism managed on Komodo Island, particularly in terms of entrance fee policies, visitor capacity, and environmental impact?
- What initiatives has InJourney implemented to improve the well-being of local communities living around tourist areas?
- What initiatives has InJourney implemented to reduce carbon emissions from tourism business activities on the environment in Labuan Bajo?

6. The Future of Labuan Bajo as a Priority Destination

- How has Labuan Bajo developed since being designated a super-priority destination?
- What are InJourney's long-term hopes and goals for developing Labuan Bajo as a sustainable tourism destination?
- To what extent have the technology and innovations implemented by InJourney improved the tourist experience in Labuan Bajo without damaging its natural environment? (Especially in increasing the percentage of green tourism)

BALAI TAMAN NASIONAL KOMODO

1. Background and Role of Komodo National Park

- What are the roles and responsibilities of Komodo National Park?

- Since when have you been involved in managing or supervising tourism activities in the Komodo National Park area?

2. Conservation and Tourism Management

- How does Komodo National Park maintain a balance between conservation goals and tourism development?
- How does Komodo National Park collaborate with the local government, community organizations, and local communities in Komodo conservation efforts?
- Are there any programs or initiatives that involve local communities—especially women—in conservation or tourism activities?
- In your opinion, what are the biggest environmental threats arising from tourism activities in the Komodo National Park area?
- How has the economy of the communities living around Komodo National Park developed since it was designated a priority destination? What impacts have been felt by the surrounding population?
- How is the zoning system (such as core zones, tourist zones, and traditional use zones) being implemented in the field?
- Are there any recent policies or actions taken to address tourist overcapacity or ecological damage?
- Has there been international collaboration/support for funding Komodo National Park conservation? (either through projects or funding)

3. Collaboration with Stakeholders

- How is the collaborative relationship with local governments, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), or the private sector in supporting conservation?
- To what extent are local communities involved in decision-making processes related to conservation area management?
- What are the typical challenges faced in coordinating with other institutions or private tourism operators?
- How does Komodo National Park respond to input, complaints, or needs from the surrounding community, especially those living in the conservation area?
- In your opinion, are local communities currently supportive of conservation efforts? What are the reason?

- How will Komodo National Park be involved in the Tour de NTT, which will be supported by the Ministry of Tourism and initiated by the NTT Provincial Government?

4. Future Aspirations and Recommendations

- What is your vision or hope for the future of sustainable tourism in Komodo National Park?
- In your opinion, what still needs to be improved to support sustainable tourism in this area? (in terms of policy, infrastructure, green funding, education, etc.)
- Are there any best practices from the KNP experience that could serve as examples for other conservation areas?
- Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the topic of sustainable tourism that you believe is important to understand in this research?

PEMERINTAH DAERAH (PEMDA) MANGARAI BARAT

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of Labuan Bajo's designation as a National Priority Tourism Destination?

- Labuan Bajo has been designated as one of five Super Priority Tourism Destinations (SPTD) by the central government. In your opinion, what are the most significant positive impacts (advantages) of this designation on regional development and local communities?
- On the other hand, are there any challenges (disadvantages) such as pressure on the environment, local culture, or unequal economic access that arise as a result of this designation?

2. Following such rapid infrastructure development, how does the local government maintain and ensure the sustainability of the facilities that have been built (roads, airports, ports, public restrooms, etc.)?

- Does the local government have a long-term plan for infrastructure maintenance, including allocation of funds and human resources?
- Who is technically and financially responsible for maintaining the infrastructure?
- Are there any particular challenges in managing the infrastructure after it is completed by the central government?

3. With the increasing number of tourists each year, how is the local government addressing resource challenges such as clean water, waste management, and electricity availability?

- Are there policies or collaborations with relevant institutions regarding the provision and distribution of clean water for tourists and residents?
- How is the waste management system implemented in the city and tourist areas? Is there a sorting or recycling system in place?
- To what extent is Labuan Bajo's electricity capacity sufficient to support tourism growth and the development of hotels, restaurants, and other businesses?

4. Does the economic growth from the tourism sector in Labuan Bajo truly benefit the local community, or is it predominantly enjoyed by investors and visitors from outside the region?

- Does the local government have data or observations regarding the distribution of economic benefits (for example, who owns hotels/restaurants/businesses)?
- Does the local government encourage support for local businesses or MSMEs to increase their competitiveness amidst the influx of foreign investment?
- What is the local employment situation—are many local people absorbed in the formal tourism sector?

5. Is there currently a dedicated budget to support sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo? Are there funding sources other than the regional budget (APBD)? What alternative funding strategies is the local government currently developing or planning to develop?

- Is there any collaboration with the private sector, donor agencies, or innovative funding schemes (e.g., green financing, carbon offset tourism, or CSR)?
- Have tourism levies or hotel/restaurant taxes been optimized as sources of Regional Original Income (PAD)?
- What is the local government's strategy for managing funds to support environmental conservation, community capacity building, and sustainable promotion?

6. What forms of coordination and synergy does the local government establish with the NTT Provincial Government, Bank NTT, the Komodo National Park Office, and investors entering Labuan Bajo?

- Is there a permanent forum or communication platform between stakeholders for program planning and implementation?
- Is the local government directly involved in evaluating and granting permits to investors, especially those operating in conservation or coastal areas?
- What is the role of Bank NTT or regional financial institutions in supporting the financing of local projects in the tourism sector?

YAYASAN KOMODO

1. Background and Role of the Yayasan Kmoodo's

- How does the Yayasan Kmoodo's view the concept of sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo?
- Are there any Yayasan Kmoodo's initiatives or programs related to cultural or environmental conservation in Labuan Bajo?
- How does the Yayasan Kmoodo's collaborate with the local government in developing sustainable tourism?
- In your opinion, what is the role of the local government in ensuring sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo?
- What is the Yayasan Komodo's role in mobilizing the Muslim community in West Manggarai, Komodo Island, and Labuan Bajo?
- Are there any Yayasan Komodo members living on Komodo Island who can provide information regarding public facilities and livelihoods to promote sustainable tourism? Are there any Komodo Foundation members there who can be contacted?

2. Impact of Tourism on Local Communities

- How has the development of tourism on Komodo Island and Labuan Bajo affected the lives of local people?
- In your opinion, does tourism bring more benefits or challenges to the community? Could you explain?

3. Facilities and Infrastructure

- What is the condition of public facilities in the Labuan Bajo area? (such as clean water, electricity, and transportation)
- Has the development of tourism infrastructure in this area benefited the local community?
- What facilities are still lacking and need improvement?

4. Hopes and Recommendations

- In your opinion, what can the government or tourism industry players do to better support the welfare of the local community?
- What are your hopes for the future of Komodo Island and Labuan Bajo?
- If you could convey a message to tourists visiting this area, what would it be?

BADAN PELAKSANA OTORITA LABUAN BAJO FLORES (BPOLBF)

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of Labuan Bajo's designation as a National Priority Tourism Destination?

- Labuan Bajo has been designated as one of five Super Priority Tourism Destinations (SPTD) by the central government.
- In your opinion, what are the most significant positive impacts (advantages) of this designation on regional development and local communities?
- On the other hand, are there any challenges (disadvantages) such as pressure on the environment, local culture, or unequal economic access that arise as a result of this designation?

2. Following such rapid infrastructure development, how does the Indonesian Agency for the Protection and Protection of the Indonesian National Parks (BPOLBF) manage and ensure the sustainability of the facilities that have been built (roads, airports, ports, public restrooms, etc.)?

- What is the BPOLBF's long-term plan for infrastructure maintenance, including the allocation of funds and human resources?
- Who is technically and financially responsible for maintaining the infrastructure?
- Are there any particular challenges in managing the infrastructure after it is completed by the central government?

3. With the increasing number of tourists each year, how does the BPOLBF address resource challenges such as clean water, waste management, and electricity availability?

- Are there policies or collaborations with relevant institutions for the procurement and distribution of clean water for tourists and residents?
- How is the waste management system implemented in the city and tourist areas? Is there a sorting or recycling system in place?
- To what extent is Labuan Bajo's electricity capacity sufficient to support tourism growth and the development of hotels, restaurants, and other businesses?

4. Does the economic growth from the tourism sector in Labuan Bajo truly benefit the local community, or is it predominantly enjoyed by investors and visitors from outside the region?

- What regulations does the BPOLBF establish for business owners wishing to establish tourist destinations?
- Does the BPOLBF monitor the distribution of economic benefits (for example, who owns hotels/restaurants/businesses)?
- Does it encourage local businesses or MSMEs to be more competitive amidst the influx of foreign investment?
- What is the local employment situation like—are many local people employed in the formal tourism sector?

5. Is there currently a dedicated budget to support sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo? Are there funding sources other than the regional budget (APBD)? What alternative funding strategies are being or will be developed by the BPOLBF and the local government?

- Is there any collaboration with the private sector or international institutions to utilize innovative funding schemes (e.g., green financing, carbon offset tourism, or CSR)?
- Have tourism levies or hotel/restaurant taxes been optimized as a source of Regional Original Income (PAD)?
- Is there a green tax or carbon emission tax scheme in place to reduce emissions from tourism activities?
- What is the BPOLBF's strategy for managing funds to support environmental conservation, particularly in optimizing collaboration with Komodo National Park?

6. What forms of coordination and synergy are being implemented by the BPOLBF, the local government, the NTT Provincial Government, Bank NTT, the Komodo National Park Office, and investors entering Labuan Bajo?

- Is there a permanent forum or communication platform between stakeholders for program planning and implementation?
- How does the BPOLBF coordinate with the West Manggarai Regional Government and other parties, such as Injourney (a state-owned enterprise), investors, and the Komodo National Park Office, in managing the tourism area?
- Is the regional government directly involved in evaluating and granting permits to investors, especially those operating in conservation or coastal areas?
- What role do Bank NTT or other regional financial institutions play in supporting the financing of local projects in the tourism sector?
- How does the BPOLBF envision the future of Labuan Bajo in the next 10–20 years—as a mass tourism city, or as a community-based ecotourism and conservation center?

Appendix 5. Interview Documentations

- Interview with : Secretary of Manggrai Barat Regent Government, Bapak Fransiskus Sales Sodo S,E. and in front of Mangarai Barat office regency.



- Interview with : Head of Balai Taman Nasional Komodo Mr. Hendrikus RaniSiga, S.Hut, M.Sc and in front of Balai Taman Nasional Komodo.



- Interview with : Direktur Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores (BPOLBF), Dr. Frans Teguh, M.A.,CHE, in BPOLBF office.



- Interview with Former Staff of Yayasan Komodo, Mrs. Widya Djatinignrum



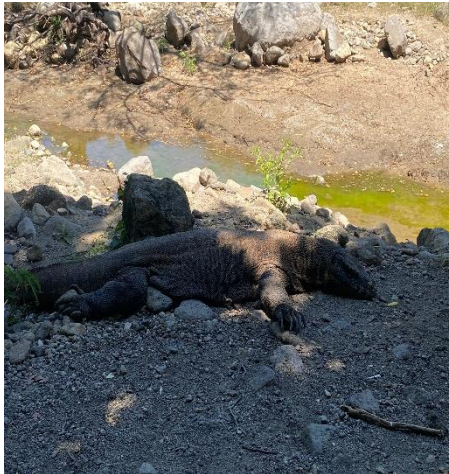
- Interview with : Chief of Homestay Association Manggarai Barat, Mr. Ludgerius Minus.



- Interview with : Head of Village, Desa Komodo, Bapak H.Achsan



- Picture in Komodo Village, Komodo Island



- Interview with : Chief of Community Sanggar Compang Toe, Kampung Melo, Bapak Yosef Ugis

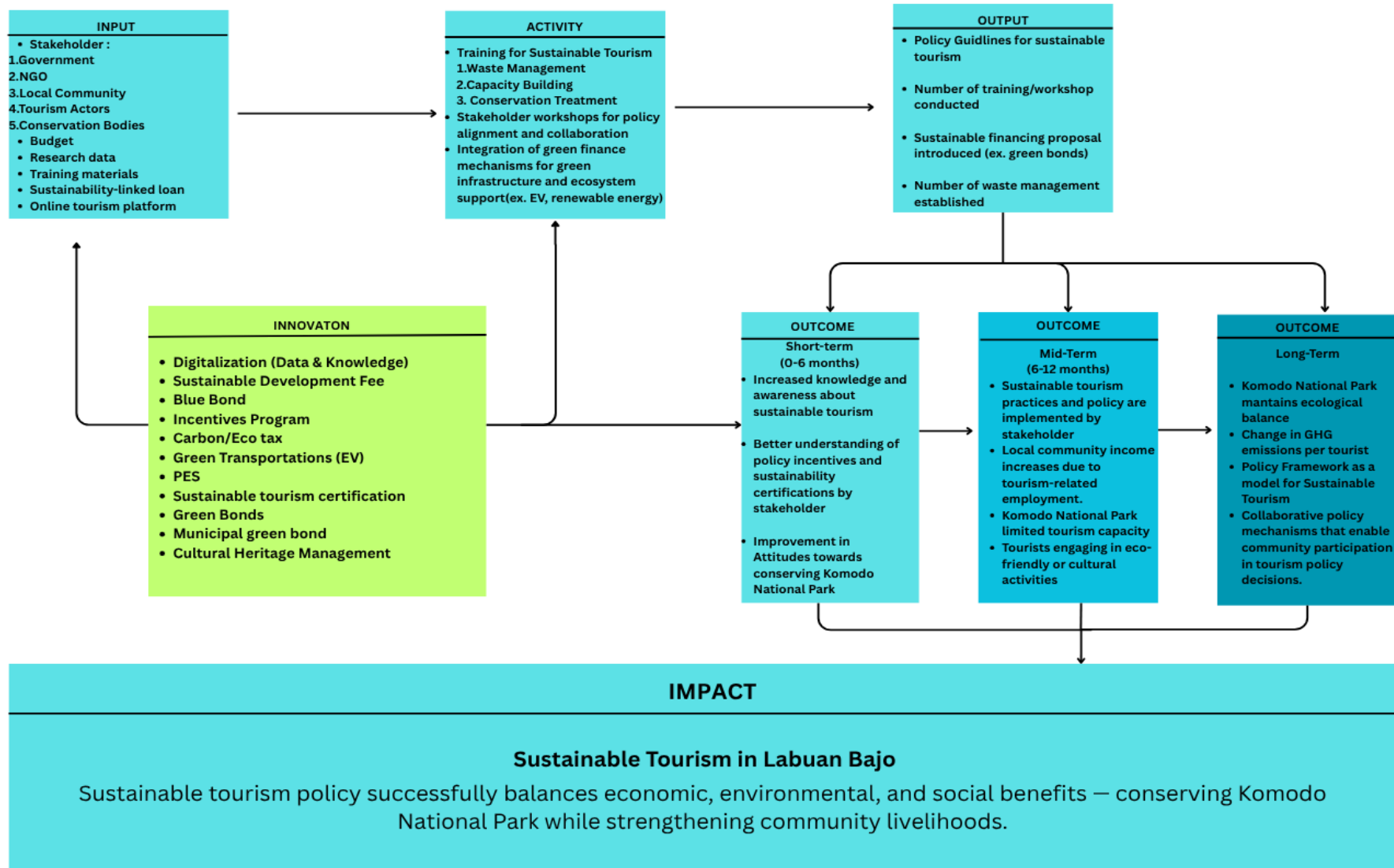




- Interview with : Head of Village, Desa Kampung Air, Mr. Supandril



Appendix 6. Theory of Change for Sustainable Tourism in Labuan Bajo



Assumptions :

- Stakeholders are willing to collaborate and implement sustainable tourism practices.
- The policy incentives will be adequate to motivate stakeholder to follow the guidelines.
- Tourists are willing to support eco-based travel
- Financing for sustainable tourism infrastructure is mobilized
- The community will derive financial benefits from sustainable tourism, fostering ongoing support for conservation.
- Sustainable tourism practices are attractive to tourists, strengthening financial incentives for stakeholders
- Komodo National Park ecosystem is resilient and able to regenerate with reduced pressure from tourism.

To strengthen the operational logic of this Theory of Change, author used forecast. It outlines a timeline of anticipated impacts, approximate budget requirements, and measurable indicators to track progress. While the precise scale of change depends on local data, stakeholder participation, and external funding, this forecast offers a preliminary roadmap for turning intentions into outcomes. Based on comparative budgets from Southeast Asia's sustainable tourism pilots projects.

In sustainable tourism planning, especially when using Theory of Change forecasting, we often lack full-time series data in one place (like Labuan Bajo). So, the most rigorous and accepted method is to use comparable pilot programs or frameworks from similar contexts (same region, similar population, same ecological/tourism pressures) to estimate realistic change over time.

The selection of key performance indicators and projected outcome timelines was grounded in comparative forecasting models from similar tourism destinations across Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and the global south. For example, Labuan Bajo's waste reduction targets reference the UNEP-supported Bali case (2021), which demonstrated an 18–23% drop in per-tourist waste after community-led interventions. Similarly, the MRV readiness forecast is based on Vietnam's Hoi An carbon pilot and Indonesia's own GCF Readiness Report (UNDP, 2020). Cultural microenterprise growth estimates align with case evidence from Yayasan Komodo's weaving revival and global benchmarks from the Pacific Tourism Organisation and UNWTO's Tourism4SDGs framework. These evidence-

based comparisons ensure that the forecasted impacts are both regionally grounded and policy-relevant.

This appendix provides the evidence base supporting the projected budgets, timelines, and key performance indicators (KPIs) outlined in the Theory of Change forecasting model for sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo. The indicators are grounded in comparative models from Indonesia, the ASEAN region, and global sustainable tourism frameworks. These cases were selected for their relevance to coastal, heritage, or community-based tourism contexts and offer reliable analogs for Labuan Bajo's development trajectory. Below are the details table :

No.	Name of Project	Detailed :
1.	Bali Waste Reduction Pilot – UNEP (2021)	Project: Community-led interventions on tourist waste reduction Result: 18–23% reduction in tourist waste per capita within 2 years Relevance: Supports projection of a 20% waste reduction over 3 years in Labuan Bajo
2.	Indonesia GCF Readiness Programme – UNDP (2020)	Focus: Strengthening institutional readiness for MRV and climate finance Result: Sectors gained access to GCF financing within 2–3 years after MRV framework set-up Relevance: Informs the forecasted timeline for Labuan Bajo's MRV and carbon trade readiness
3.	Yayasan Komodo Weaving Program (Primary Data)	Source: Interview with Widya Djatiningrum

		Result: Revival of women-led weaving enterprises with national exposure (Jakarta Fashion Week) Relevance: Used to estimate a 30–40% income increase for women-led cultural businesses
4.	ASEAN Sustainable Tourism Indicators Toolkit (2016)	Scope: Developed core/optional indicators for sustainable destinations in ASEAN Indicators Used: % women in leadership, # multistakeholder consultations, cultural site protection Relevance: Forms basis of KPIs on gender equity, governance inclusion, and cultural safeguarding
5.	Hoi An Carbon and Waste MRV Pilot – Vietnam (2019–2021)	Intervention: Local MRV systems for tourism emissions and waste Result: Enabled access to voluntary carbon market and informed local policy Relevance: Benchmark for timeline and function of MRV system in Labuan Bajo
6.	UNWTO Tourism4SDGs Platform	Purpose: Connects SDG targets with tourism outcome metrics

		Relevant Goals: SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption), SDG 13 (Climate), SDG 5 (Gender Equity) Relevance: Underpins your indicators on environmental performance and gender participation
	Pacific Tourism Organisation – Sustainable Livelihoods Model (2021)	Scope: Resilience planning in SIDS (e.g., Fiji, Samoa) via cultural tourism Result: Strong correlation between community co-governance and livelihood improvement Relevance: Provides model for community-led planning and timeframes for impact (3–5 years)
8.	Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Destination Criteria	Relevant Criteria: A12.1: Monitoring of tourism’s environmental indicators B2.4: Inclusion of local communities in tourism decision-making Relevance: Aligns your KPI system with globally recognized sustainability standards

Stakeholder Involvement :

Stakeholder Group	Estimated Number Involved	Notes

Government actors (BPOLBF, reGENCY, etc.)	25–30	Planning and budget agencies, tourism boards
Indigenous/village leaders	15–20	Representation from adat and cultural communities
NGOs, and researchers	10–15	Implementation partners for MRV and monitoring
Private tourism sector (hotels/SMEs)	60–80	Targeted for emissions reporting and green investment
Women-led cultural SMEs	100–150	Based on weaving and arts initiatives
Tourists impacted annually	~200,000	Indirect beneficiaries of improved sustainability measures

Estimated Budget :

Output	Estimation Budget	Notes
MRV System for Carbon & Waste	\$250,000 (pilot phase)	Based on similar pilots in ASEAN (ADB, 2020)
Multi-Stakeholder Tourism Council	\$50,000 annually	Secretariat, meetings, facilitation. (ICLEI SEA, 2022)
Cultural Microenterprise Fund	\$100,000 initial capital	Women-led weaving cooperatives, training, tools (Richards &

		Munsters, 2010; Cole, 2007)
Sustainable Finance Training (Gov't)	\$75,000	Workshops on green bonds, carbon credit literacy (OECD DAC, 2019; UNDP, 2021)
Monitoring & Evaluation (2 years)	\$40,000	Third-party M&E unit + participatory assessments (GCF, 2023; UNFCCC, 2018)

To ensure that the Theory of Change is grounded in both realism and scalability, a budget forecast was developed based on comparable sustainability and tourism governance initiatives in Southeast Asia. The total estimated cost for implementing the core activities over a 3-year period is approximately \$320,000 USD. This includes investment in Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) systems, stakeholder platform coordination, cultural revitalization, and financing feasibility studies. Cost references were drawn from the Green Climate Fund (2023), UNDP's Climate Finance Frameworks (2021), and ICLEI Southeast Asia reports (2022).

Timeline Implementation and Impact :

Time Frame	Expected Milestones
0–6 months	Stakeholder engagement, Improvement attitude toward Sustainable Tourism
1 year	Sustainable tourism policy, Carbon and waste baseline data published, Income increase, tourist engage in eco-friendly and cultural activities
3 years	Verified indicators tracked annually; early access to voluntary carbon finance markets

5 years	Measurable improvements in environmental, economic, and cultural outcomes

Forecasted Outcomes and KPI :

Outcomes	Metric (KPI)	Forecast (over 3–5 years)	Basis for Estimation
Environmental	↓ Tourist waste per capita	-20% in 3 years	Based on tourism waste reduction in Bali (UNEP, 2021)
Climate Finance Readiness	Number MRV reports produced annually	From 0 → 3+ per year	Based on similar MRV programs in Vietnam
Cultural Income	↑ income of weaving collectives	30–40% increase in 5 years	Based on Yayasan Komodo case + Bank Mandiri
Women's Participation	% of women in tourism planning boards	From <10% → 40% in 3 years	Based on gender inclusion frameworks (UNWTO)
Stakeholder Meetings	Number of multistakeholder consultations held/year	At least 6 times per year	Recommended by ASEAN tourism toolkit
Tourism Carbon Readiness	Inclusion in NDC tourism roadmap	Baseline → inclusion in draft NDC within 5 years	Based on climate policy cycles in Indonesia

To strengthen the operational logic of this Theory of Change, a basic forecast model has been constructed. It outlines a timeline of anticipated impacts, approximate budget requirements, and measurable indicators to track progress. While the precise scale of change depends on political will, stakeholder participation, and external funding, this forecast offers a preliminary roadmap for turning intentions into outcomes. Based on comparative budgets from Southeast Asia's sustainable tourism pilots and GCF readiness projects, estimated costs range from \$40,000 to \$250,000 per intervention. Key milestones, such as MRV development, stakeholder engagement, and cultural microenterprise integration are expected within 1–3 years, with long-term benefits anticipated by year five. Indicators include access to finance, reduced ecological stress, and improved cultural equity in tourism governance.