

# Community Empowerment as a Catalyst for Marine Ecotourism: The Case of Spermonde Archipelago, Makassar

Yudha Prakasa<sup>1</sup>, Michael Rudolfus Sawu<sup>2</sup>, M. Farid Ulinnuha<sup>3</sup>

Udayana University, Indonesia<sup>1-3</sup>

[yudhaprakasaaa@gmail.com](mailto:yudhaprakasaaa@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [sawu.2281011041@student.unud.ac.id](mailto:sawu.2281011041@student.unud.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,

[ulinnuha.2281011051@student.unud.ac.id](mailto:ulinnuha.2281011051@student.unud.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>



## Article History

Received on 15 September 2024

1<sup>st</sup> Revision on 3 October 2024

2<sup>nd</sup> Revision on 7 October 2024

3<sup>rd</sup> Revision on 2 November 2024

Accepted on 7 January 2025

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aimed to examine the development of marine ecotourism and community participation in marine ecotourism development in the Spermonde Archipelago. The authors used these findings as a foundation to create a conceptual framework for community empowerment in marine ecotourism in the Spermonde Archipelago.

**Research Methodology:** The study was conducted on several islands in the Spermonde Archipelago, Makassar City, including Samalona Island, Kodingareng Keke Island, Barrang Caddi Island, and Lanjukang Island. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and literature review. The informants included local communities, government officials, private-sector representatives, and academics. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis.

**Results:** This study developed a framework for community empowerment in marine ecotourism, focusing on improving political, economic, and environmental quality of life. Based on findings from the Spermonde Archipelago, the research showed that ecotourism has transformed natural resources into tourism products, resulting in diverse community perceptions of its impacts. Community involvement is driven by economic motives but limited by knowledge and skills in integrating tourism and conservation. Nonetheless, communities have opportunities to participate in development, planning, and benefit distribution.

**Limitations:** This study did not offer a detailed set of practical strategies based on the formulated community empowerment model.

**Contribution:** This study contributes to the conceptual understanding of the community empowerment model in the Spermonde Archipelago. This model is expected to serve as a theoretical reference for implementing community empowerment focused on social and environmental justice.

**Keywords:** *Ecotourism, coastal destination, community empowerment, tourism impacts, community participation*

**How to Cite:** Prakasa, Y., Sawu, M. R., & Ulinnuha, M. F. (2025). Community Empowerment as a Catalyst for Marine Ecotourism: The Case of Spermonde Archipelago, Makassar. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship*, 6(2), 79-91.

## 1. Introduction

The paradigm shift in the tourism sector has evolved, with sustainable tourism increasingly being seen as a holistic approach to utilizing natural and cultural resources within the industry. With a continued focus on growth, sustainable tourism aims to ensure that tourism resources are used sustainably and

remain available to future generations. However, sustainable tourism is facing numerous challenges. Gills (2020) identified climate change, ecological degradation, capitalism, neoliberal globalization, and the COVID-19 pandemic as a global crisis. Among these, the most pressing threats are climate change and ecological degradation, both of which lead to long-term irreversible effects.

These issues have presented contemporary challenges to tourism since the emergence of ecotourism. As a concept, ecotourism has emerged within the discourse of sustainable development, aiming to address concerns about persistent poverty, social injustice, food security, and environmental issues. Stronza, Hunt, and Fitzgerald (2019) explain that ecotourism provides economic benefits to communities and contributes to environmental sustainability. Key attributes of ecotourism include environmental sustainability, local community participation, environmental justice, conservation, and development. Hui, Raza, Khan, Zaman, and Ogadimma (2023) added that the values of ecotourism are based on holistic understanding, collaboration, tourism business diversification, engagement, transformation, cultural preservation, and environmentally responsible tourism. Therefore, the preparation of ecotourism products for coastal destinations is crucial for sustainable development.

The Spermonde Archipelago, also known as the Sangkarang Islands, is a group of islands located in the waters of southern Sulawesi. The archipelago boasts significant marine tourism potential (Ratnah, Rinda, & Sarira, 2022), which has been managed and developed by the local communities. The Spermonde Archipelago refers to approximately 120 islands southwest of the Sulawesi Island. Situated within the Coral Triangle, the islands are positioned at coordinates 4°52'32.16"S 119°06'51.84"E and administratively fall into two regions: Liukang Tupabbiring District and Liukang Tupabbiring Utara District in Pangkajene and Islands Regency (commonly referred to as Pangkep), South Sulawesi Province. The development prospects for the South Sulawesi Archipelago are outlined in South Sulawesi Provincial Regulation No. 3 of 2022 on the Regional Spatial Plan for South Sulawesi Province for 2022-2041. However, the islands in this region have experienced ecological degradation owing to the unsustainable use of resources. Haya and Fujii (2019) highlighted this issue, revealing that the region has experienced a decline in live coral cover in shallow reef habitats.

Community empowerment is a crucial effort that must be prioritized to achieve optimal development. Therefore, the authors aimed to develop a model for community empowerment in the Spermonde Archipelago. The authors examine the development of marine ecotourism and community participation in its growth in the Spermonde Archipelago. They hope that this study will contribute to a conceptual framework for inclusive and sustainable tourism development by empowering local communities.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Marine Ecotourism**

Ecotourism has emerged in the discourse on sustainable tourism development. This concept ensures optimal utilization of tourism resources while considering economic, cultural, and environmental aspects (Chin & Hampton, 2020; Stronza et al., 2019; Tiimub et al., 2020), thereby preserving the sustainability of these resources. Preserving what already exists at a destination while generating profits is the core principle of ecotourism. Das and Chatterjee (2015) explain that ecotourism offers positive benefits from community involvement beyond economic aspects and contributes to environmental sustainability. Based on this, sustainability is a central theme in ecotourism, making ecotourism a progressively evolving framework in contemporary tourism discourse. Effective and targeted management and development are crucial for ecotourism, as conservation typically affects local communities. Yeboah, Afram, Quampah, and Kulega (2019) revealed that communities face challenges (if not termed as conflicts) near conservation areas. They find it difficult to adapt to the risks associated with ecotourism development, primarily because of their limited capacity or their inaction in the face of monkey attacks, as well as their fear of sanctions from authorities. In addition to these negative impacts, another challenge related to conservation-based tourism is the climate crisis, which causes declines in some species that are attractions in conservation areas, potentially reducing the satisfaction of future eco-tourists (Ekpah, 2021).

The logic of growth in ecotourism is still valid, but the transformative role of environmental conservation in ecotourism is a key element frequently highlighted in the literature (Buckley, Castley, Pegas, Mossaz, & Steven, 2012; Buckley, Morrison, & Castley, 2016; Koroy, Yulianda, & Butet, 2017; Steven, Castley, & Buckley, 2013). Koroy et al. (2017) argued that ecotourism contributes to the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem functions. Arida (2017) adds that ecotourism can be understood from three basic perspectives: 1) product, 2) market, and 3) development. Ecotourism is based on the richness of natural resources. As a market, ecotourism refers to travel that focuses on environmental conservation efforts. As a development approach, ecotourism serves as a method for environmentally friendly resource utilization and management.

Marine ecotourism is closely related to marine tourism, as both utilize the same natural resources (UN, 2021). Garrod, Wilson, and Bruce (2003) argue that marine ecotourism should be viewed more as a process than as a specific type of tourism and that *“it would be unwise to exclude certain instances of tourism because they do not fit within one’s conception of what form of ecotourism it should take.”* Marine ecotourism refers to a responsible form of tourism in natural areas that supports marine ecosystem conservation, provides welfare to local communities, and creates educational experiences for tourists (Casimiro, Ventura, Botelho, & Guerreiro, 2023). Marine ecotourism is expected to play a role in implementing the principles of sustainable tourism, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 14 (life below water: conserve coastal and marine areas).

Marine ecotourism, as shown in several studies (Milne, Thorburn, Rosin, & Deuchar, 2021; Nickerson, Jorgenson, & Boley, 2016), has demonstrated a significant economic impact. Nickerson et al. (2016) argues that tourists who are environmentally conscious and supportive of local communities tend to spend more money. Marine ecotourism utilizes marine and aquatic ecosystems where tourists interact with wildlife in these environments. In many cases, this revenue directly supports marine conservation by funding protection efforts, contributing to conservation science, and aiding research activities (Milne et al., 2021).

## **2.2 Community Participation**

Ecotourism, in particular, emphasizes the sustainability of both the local economy and environment (Koroy et al., 2017; Stronza et al., 2019; Wondirad, 2019). Therefore, community participation is crucial in ecotourism development. Lamberti, Noci, Guo, and Zhu (2011) emphasizes that community participation is essential. Abdillah and Prayogo (2020) demonstrated that local community autonomy is reflected in their involvement in ecotourism development. Community participation demonstrates the equitable redistribution of power between active providers and recipient groups. This participation is tiered, reflecting the gradation, degree of authority, and responsibility evident in the decision-making processes. Related to this study, effective governance of natural resources entails integration and empowerment of local communities in their management. Therefore, strong local leadership and active community participation are vital for understanding local perspectives, improving decision-making, and maximizing social and economic benefits. This is crucial because local officials must engage in comprehensive discussions with various stakeholders about the potential consequences of removing community tourism and related activities from the management of protected areas (Tiimub et al., 2019; Zakaria, 2021).

Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, and Ingram (2011) explain that community participation encompasses the full spectrum of local involvement based on the community’s perceptions of tourism sector development impacts. In line with this, Hung et al. (2011) classified community participation into three aspects: motivation, opportunity, and ability, as part of the informational process involved. These categories are considered key determinants of community participation. Motivation is based on the local community’s perspective of the impact of tourism. The benefits of tourism enhance its importance to the community and play a crucial role in encouraging participation (Hung et al., 2011).

Even if the community is motivated, it does not guarantee effective management of the tourism sector through their involvement. While full community participation is ideal (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Pretty,

1995), such participation may not be effective without the necessary capabilities. Thus, motivation alone is insufficient for effective participation. Capability is multifaceted, encompassing awareness, experience, knowledge, skills, access to information, and financial resources (Hung et al., 2011). Opportunities for participation arise when tourism developers implement a participatory approach and create a supportive framework for community engagement (Hung et al., 2011). Consequently, the ongoing relationship between the government and community represents a crucial effort to establish communication channels between local institutions and the government.

### **2.3 Community Empowerment**

Community involvement in ecotourism development inevitably has limitations. Tosun (2000) extensively discusses the limitations of community participation in tourism. Therefore, community empowerment is considered to be a crucial approach for enhancing community engagement in the development process. Daris, Massiseng, Jaya, Wahyuti, and Zaenab (2023) argue that community empowerment is a vital aspect, which aims to achieve collective goals. It involves advocacy efforts aimed at transforming a community's state of powerlessness into one where they have control over their lives (Foy, 1997; Sadan, 1997).

Community empowerment in tourism must address the economic, psychological, social, and political dimensions (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). These factors are crucial for maximizing the sustainable benefits for the community. A primary challenge in community empowerment is the scarcity of human resources, which leads to limited community participation and control. Economic empowerment involves ensuring that financial benefits related to tourism reach all community members, leading to significant enhancements in their quality of life (Scheyvens, 1999).

## **3. Research methodology**

This study employed a qualitative method using a case-study approach. Case studies are a research strategy designed to investigate and examine real-life phenomena, particularly when these phenomena lack clear boundaries. This method is valuable because it uses various sources to gather information and evidence (Yin, 2008). In this study, the authors analyzed four cases based on research locations, aiming to assess development and community participation on each island. This analysis helped the authors create or outline a conceptual framework for community empowerment in the context of marine ecotourism development.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. This study used qualitative thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that involves identifying and grouping the data based on emerging themes. Patterns or themes that arose were then analyzed to reveal the connections or relationships between them. This method draws on data from semi-structured interviews conducted by the authors. This approach facilitates the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns or themes present in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Orea-Giner, Gonzalez-Reverte, & Fuentes-Moraleda, 2022).

This study was conducted across several islands in the Spermonde Archipelago, situated in the waters of Makassar City. This study focuses on the following islands: 1) Samalona Island, Ujung Pandang District, Makassar City; 2) Kodingareng Keke Island, Ujung Tanah District, Makassar City; 3) Barrang Caddi Island, Kepulauan Sangkarang District, Makassar City; and 4) Lanjukang Island, Kepulauan Sangkarang District, Makassar City.

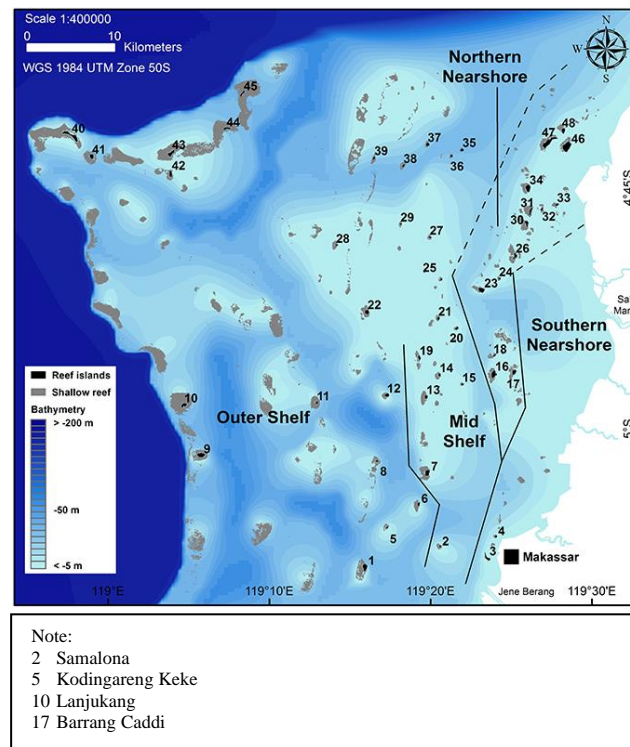


Figure 1. Spermonde Archipelago  
Source: Kench and Mann (2017)

The selection of these case study locations is due to the fact that these islands represent each district with islands in Makassar City. Berdasarkan Figure 3.1 di atas Pulau Samalona berada di nomor Data collection was carried out from January to May 2024. The participants of this study are listed in Table 3.1 below.

### 3.1 Participation in this Study

No.	Type	Code	Number of Participation	Key Informan (K) Secondary Informan (S)
1	Local Community	LC	9	K
2	Private Sector	PS	1	K
3	Government	G	2	K
4	Academia	A	2	S

Source: Authors (2024)

## 4. Results and discussions

### 4.1 Development of Marine Ecotourism Product

Destination development is closely related to tourism products. The destination comprises of several interconnected components. Cooper (2005) categorized these into key aspects, including: 1) Attractions: components that attract tourists, whether natural, cultural, or man-made; 2) amenities: facilities that support tourist activities at a destination; 3) Accessibility: infrastructure and services that facilitate movement within a destination; and 4) ancillary, which involves organizations or institutions with authority over the management and development of tourism, including human resources.

In ecotourism, product components are derived from natural wealth (Arida, 2017). Nature, as a tourism resource, attracts tourists. Nature is a crucial element in ecotourism that must be preserved through conservation. Ecotourism also aims to educate tourists about the environment, fostering awareness of the importance of preservation now and for the future (Arida, 2017). Persevation and educational efforts

are essential, as reflected in the key ecotourism principles in the literature (Fennell, 2014; Wood & Gray, 1991).

The Spermonde Archipelago features attractions centered around its rich maritime resources. Research locations highlight the dominance of marine activities such as swimming, snorkeling, diving, speedboating, and canoeing. In addition to white sandy beaches, abundant coral reefs, popular with divers, were also observed, which are a favorite among divers. Tourists can also camp these islands. These attractions play a crucial role in the development of marine ecotourism products in the Spermonde Archipelago. Tourists are key to the growth of tourism destinations, which ultimately affects local communities. Therefore, providing various support facilities is essential for offering an optimal tourist experience.

Amenities are facilities that support tourists' needs during their visits. At a destination, amenities often include existing public services, such as places of worship, healthcare facilities, and restrooms. Additionally, specialized facilities aligned with popular tourist activities are necessary to enhance tourists' experiences. In the Spermonde Archipelago, islands offer amenities, such as accommodations or homestays, eateries, gazebos, snorkeling and diving equipment rentals, souvenir shops, and communication towers. In addition to using the existing island resources, tour providers often offer additional facilities.

Accessibility is another key component of a destination product. Infrastructure availability is crucial to the delivery of ecotourism products. Accessibility refers to how easily tourists reach and move around a destination. Therefore, accessibility is a fundamental aspect of a destination's products. The islands in the Spermonde Archipelago are accessible via maritime transport from various departure points, including Tatamundong Pier, Popsa Pier, and Kayu Bangkoa Piers, where residents offer boat services. Alternatively, Losari Beach Pier offers traditional Pinisi boats and speed boats operated by private companies.

Empirical evidence shows that every island has a pier for transportation. Local residents use these piers for daily commutes to Makassar City for work, school, or other purposes such as buying goods. Regular transportation services are available to support such activities. Islands in the Ujung Pandang District, such as Samalona, Khayangan, and Lae-Lae, are closest to Makassar City. In contrast, islands in the Kepulauan Sangkarang and Ujung Tanah Districts are significantly farther away, with travel times of up to 3-4 hours. Human resources play a significant role in the development of tourism. The tourism sector has promoted economic diversification within the community, as shown by the social adaptation to frequent tourist visits. This has increased the local involvement in tourism management and development. However, limited knowledge and skills within the community challenge political engagement with tourism-related groups.

Destination development inevitably impacts a community's economic, social, and cultural aspects. These impacts shape the local community's perceptions and attitudes toward the tourism sector (Febriandhika & Kurniawan, 2019). Goodwin (1995) explains that, in ecotourism, negative impacts on the local community should be minimized, while the positive benefits should be maximized. Thus, local perceptions and attitudes are crucial in guiding destination development. Ecotourism growth is expected to have positive economic impacts on the local community. Economic well-being is essential for ecotourism development. Positive socioeconomic impacts influence local perceptions, which, in turn, affect local involvement and attitudes toward economic condition improvement. Empirical evidence shows that the local community views tourism's economic impact positively. This is evident in the various amenities developed by the locals to generate income. Local built amenities reflect the community's attitude. This adaptation can also be seen as a response to insufficient catches from fishing, promoting the community to view tourism as crucial economic support.

Underwater exploration is a major attraction that has prompted frequent coral transplantation programs. However, many of these programs failed on Samalona Island, leaving waste on the seabed.

Environmental issues in the archipelago are complex, with coral reefs damaging dynamite and poisonous fishing practices. These practices also create additional challenges for the fishermen. Poor water conditions pose an ecological issue for islands near Makassar, including Lae-Lae, Khayangan, and Samalona. The authors argue that extensive coastal reclamation in Makassar City has caused significant ecological changes on Samalona Island. As noted by Faizal, Samawi, and Hamzah (2016) note that the marine ecosystem around Makassar City is experiencing critical degradation. Erosion that affects island communities indicates that climate change poses a severe challenge. A degraded ecosystem in one area can impact neighboring regions, as habitat loss affects the surrounding waters. Coral reef ecosystems found along coastlines and small islands are especially vulnerable to degradation and land-based pollution (Rani, Nessa, Jompa, Thoaha, & Faizal, 2014). Kodingareng Keke Island still suffers from the negative impacts of a former mining operation that affected local fishing grounds.

In addition to the climate challenges concerning environmental conditions, waste management is another significant obstacle. Empirical evidence has shown that there are piles of improperly managed waste in several locations. This visual pollution results from negligence but also from operational challenges in waste collection. Burial and incineration are the most commonly used waste management methods. The community negatively perceives the degraded marine environment, leading them to view tourism as an income source. In fact, there is even a saying that the amount of waste is correlated with community income. However, this is not ideal, as quality of life not only affects economic factors but also environmental quality.

The sociocultural aspects of the community have changed significantly with tourism development. The community has adapted to the influx of tourists to the Spermonde Archipelago. This adaptation is evident in community economic activities, which are now centered on tourism. Economic motivation is the driving force of these social changes. Tourism management and development have shifted the community's mindset away from solely relying on fishing. Empirical evidence shows that the tourism sector has encouraged the community to organize itself into tourism-focused groups, supported by the local government.

The Spermonde Archipelago community is primarily composed of Bugis-Makassar ethnic groups. Community-inherited local knowledge is a crucial asset that must be preserved. Although cultural resources are not yet tourism products, local knowledge of utilizing natural resources is an important asset that can drive sustainable tourism. The authors observe the community's resilience, solidarity, and hard work. This attitude is captured in the local saying "*Akbulo sibatangpakik, na mareso tamatappuk, na nampak niak sannang la ini pusakai*", meaning "*Only through unity and hard work can true happiness be achieved.*"

#### **4.2 Community Participation in Developing Marine Ecotourism Product**

Community participation is a central issue in ecotourism. Timothy (1999) explains that participatory planning is an approach that involves local communities in development, as they directly experience the impacts of development. In ecotourism, the involvement of local communities in planning and benefit distribution is crucial. According to Hung et al. (2011), participation involves a series of perceptions. Furthermore, it is explained that community participation includes factors like motivation, capacity, and opportunities within the development process.

Empirical evidence shows local community involvement in the Spermonde Archipelago's marine ecotourism through various community groups. Although each community member has the resources to manage their small businesses, political participation in destination planning is essential. This is because it provides the community with a significant role in planning, offering it a platform to voice their concerns. Fundamentally, achieving and experiencing well-being are vital aspects of local communities in the ecotourism context. Community participation in economic benefits is evident through small and medium enterprises (SMEs), including simple homestays, snorkeling and diving equipment rentals, and involvement in planning through community groups. These formal activities

allow these groups to serve as platforms for advocating for local interests. This fosters inclusivity in marine ecotourism development, ensuring that it is community-driven rather than top-down.

In addition to seeking economic benefits from marine ecotourism development, communities in the Spermonde Archipelago have engaged in various conservation activities. However, while currently ceremonial, these activities can serve as a foundational step toward building environmental awareness, as noted by the authors. Environmental awareness embodies a new form of justice by prioritizing environmental well-being over mere economic sustainability through the exploitation and commodification of nature. The need for economic benefits and environmental awareness through conservation efforts are fundamental motivations for development. Reconciling these two elements is a challenging task. Empirical evidence has shown that the environment is frequently viewed as a commodity. Government policies that emphasize visitor numbers further reinforce this perspective. Sustainable tourism remains largely theoretical, and its practical implementation is still far from being realized.

Volunteer groups' environmental conservation initiatives offer crucial support to local communities. However, gaps in monitoring result in issues such as failure of coral transplantation programs that leave behind debris from nursery structures found at several sites. The Spermonde Archipelago highlights ongoing environmental issues, while serving as a positive example of local community involvement in tourism management and development. Marine ecotourism development on the Samalona Islands has provided economic benefits to the local community. However, challenges in managing visitors remain. Tourists' physical contact with coral reefs damages their protective role, leading to severe erosion of the Spermonde Archipelago. The local community plays a crucial role as a host for addressing this issue. However, limited financial resources and knowledge hinder effective community environmental management.

The community's limited capacity for marine ecotourism development should not exclude them from involvement. Optimal marine ecotourism development requires stakeholder support. Community empowerment can enhance local capabilities. Marine ecotourism development in the Spermonde Archipelago reflects local enthusiasm, despite limited resources. Thus, the authors aimed to create a model to empower local communities in marine ecotourism. This model serves as a conceptual reference for achieving optimal development and, ultimately, creating prosperity for the community with principles of social and environmental justice.

#### ***4.3 Community Empowerment in Marine Ecotourism Development***

Community-based tourism development serves as a catalyst in various Indonesian regions. Empowering local communities is a strategic priority for ecotourism development. Scheyvens (1999) explained that psychological, social, political, and economic aspects are crucial for community empowerment in tourism development. Tourism awareness is the first step in empowering local communities, as this knowledge enables them to decide whether to participate (Cornwall, 2003; Timothy, 2000, 2006). Cole (2006) emphasized that tourism-driven interactions among residents can lead them to seek greater political involvement to further their collective tourism interests. Community empowerment aims to facilitate local political engagement in decision-making and governance.

The quality of a destination is determined not only by the number of tourists but also by economic growth. Community control and participation levels are crucial. As key stakeholders in marine ecotourism, communities should be involved in both planning and distribution of benefits. Empowered communities are better positioned to address challenges in ecotourism development. Thus, stakeholders must recognize that communities deserve acknowledgment and cooperation (Xu, Jiang, Wall, & Wang, 2019). Empirical evidence has shown that communities in the Spermonde Archipelago are motivated and have opportunities to develop marine ecotourism. However, community capacity to improve sustainable destination quality remains below expectations. Building a local capacity requires strong stakeholder cooperation. At present, community involvement is driven primarily by economic interests. However, limited capacity prevents communities from effectively addressing the challenges in marine



ecotourism development in the Spermonde Archipelago. Empowerment initiatives are therefore necessary. Local empowerment aims to support economic growth and address emerging issues, especially environmental impact.

Empowering local communities involves the creation of opportunities for active participation. This involvement encompasses product development, benefit distribution, and the evaluation of development processes. The aim was to address the psychological, social, political, and economic needs of the local community. Such engagement aims to improve the quality of life of local communities through marine ecotourism development in the Spermonde Archipelago. Moreover, community involvement is rooted in local awareness of the impact of marine ecotourism.

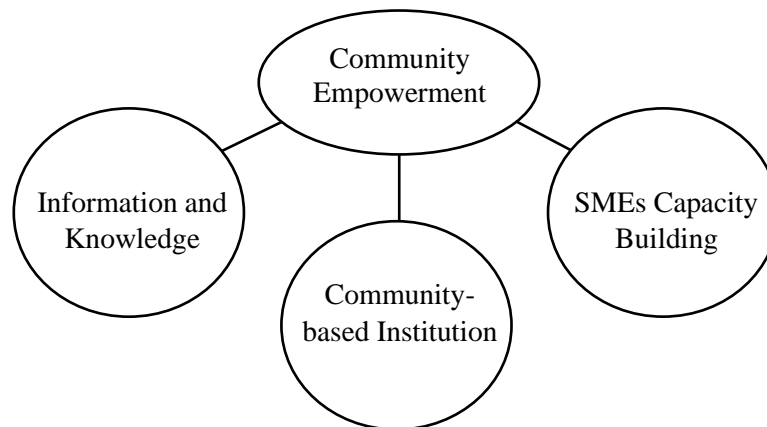


Figure 2. Community Empowerment Model  
Source: Authors (2024)

Empowering local communities in marine ecotourism development ensures that they can fully benefit from the transformative effects of ecotourism, especially in economic and environmental conservation. An empowered community is crucial in determining the quality of destination development. Destination quality is not solely measured by the increasing number of visitors each year. Community well-being and environmental health are also important indicators. Therefore, the authors argue that local community empowerment in the context of marine ecotourism encompasses three key elements: 1) information and knowledge; 2) capacity building for SMEs; and 3) strengthening and developing local institutions/organizations.

Information and knowledge are crucial resources in empowering and driving development. Community access to knowledge fosters awareness of the impact of tourism. Environmental education is essential for communities to not only improve economically, but also recognize their role in enhancing environmental conditions. Environmental management training can help the Spermonde Archipelago manage and develop marine ecotourism sustainably. In this context, information involves the community in the planning process. This approach is a strategic issue in ecotourism that emphasizes community participation. We did not expect passive or manipulative involvement. Engaging the community in the planning process aims to foster open dialogue among stakeholders and allows them to voice their needs and aspirations. On the other hand, this involvement also empowers the community politically, as their perspectives are considered and they play a role in the planning stages of marine ecotourism in the Spermonde Archipelago.

Beyond empowering the community through environmental and tourism education, encouraging SMEs to cater to the ecotourism market is essential. The marine ecotourism market includes tourists interested in natural exploration, conservation, environmental education, and the support of local communities. Ecotourism travelers are expected to have higher spending power than conventional tourists, as they favor alternative tourism experiences, such as ecotourism. Thus, local SMEs in the Spermonde

Archipelago need support and collaboration from various stakeholders, from product development to access the ecotourism market.

Community involvement in ecotourism development should provide strong support to local institutions. These institutions enable active community participation in decision-making and equitable benefit distribution. Although not the sole mechanism for participatory development, local institutions provide a structured way for island communities to unify various interests and aspirations. A well-organized structure empowers communities to strengthen their positions among other stakeholders. Traditionally, communities have been subordinated to other stakeholders, often waiting for decisions from the authorities or local elites. As a result, they often feel marginalized and lack the capacity to influence development policies.

Local institutions should use marine ecotourism as a guiding framework for policy development. This approach is crucial for perceiving ecosystem quality, which underlies the tourism sector. Moreover, conservation efforts involving tourists through ecotourism activities can help restore damaged environments. These efforts can also help revitalize the local fishing community. This will promote economic diversification by positioning tourism as a cross-sectoral element integrated with other economic sectors rather than as a standalone sector. The growth of marine ecotourism will enhance the quality of life of the local communities. Effective community empowerment fosters collaboration in marine ecotourism development. The increased independence and capability of the local community will promote sustainable tourism in the Spermonde Archipelago.

## 5. Conclusion

Marine ecotourism development in the Spermonde Archipelago leverages its abundant marine resources, drawing visitors for snorkeling, diving, and beach camping. This growth boosted local amenities and infrastructure, offering significant economic benefits to the community. While the local community has adapted to these shifts, reaping economic rewards, they also face ecological and sociocultural challenges. Sustainable tourism development requires balancing economic gains with environmental preservation and fostering active local involvement in sustainable practices. Ongoing challenges include environmental degradation from harmful fishing practices and pollution and inadequate waste management, all of which require urgent attention for the area's long-term sustainability.

Despite the involvement of local communities in economic and conservation activities, significant challenges remain. Environmental problems include coral reef damage and inadequate waste management. The community's limited knowledge and skills, along with inadequate environmental monitoring, impede effective management. Additionally, rapid socio-economic changes induced by tourism are disrupting traditional lifestyles and cultural practices, highlighting the need for sustainable development strategies.

The achievement of sustainable tourism requires a critical balance between economic and environmental preservation. Local empowerment is essential as it fosters community involvement in tourism management and the resolution of environmental issues. Enhanced environmental education, capacity-building initiatives for SMEs and effective local institutions are necessary to support this effort. By addressing these challenges and supporting community empowerment, the Spermonde Archipelago can achieve both economic prosperity and environmental sustainability.

## References

- Abdillah, L., & Prayogo, D. (2020). Ecotourism development based on local community empowerment: A case study in the forest village community institution of Wana Cendana, Dago Village, Bogor Regency. *Simulacra*, 3(1), 57-68.
- Arida, S. (2017). *Ekowisata: pengembangan, partisipasi lokal, dan tantangan ekowisata*: Cakra Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

- Buckley, R. C., Castley, J. G., Pegas, F. d. V., Mossaz, A. C., & Steven, R. (2012). A population accounting approach to assess tourism contributions to conservation of IUCN-redlisted mammal species.
- Buckley, R. C., Morrison, C., & Castley, J. G. (2016). Net effects of ecotourism on threatened species survival. *PloS one*, 11(2), e0147988.
- Casimiro, D., Ventura, M. A., Botelho, A. Z., & Guerreiro, J. (2023). Ecotourism in Marine Protected Areas as a tool to value natural capital and enhance good marine governance: A review. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 9, 1002677.
- Chin, S., & Hampton, M. (2020). The Relationship between Destination Competitiveness and Residents' Quality of Life: Lessons from Bali. *Tourism and hospitality management*, 26, 311-336. doi:10.20867/thm.26.2.3
- Cole, S. (2006). Information and empowerment: The keys to achieving sustainable tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 14(6), 629-644.
- Cooper, C. (2005). *Tourism: Principles and Practice*: Pearson Education.
- Cornwall, A. (2003). Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development. *World development*, 31(8), 1325-1342.
- Dangi, T. B., & Jamal, T. (2016). An integrated approach to "sustainable community-based tourism". *Sustainability*, 8(5), 475.
- Daris, L., Massiseng, A. N. A., Jaya, J., Wahyuti, W., & Zaenab, S. (2023). The Status of Diversity of Coral Reefs and Reef Fish Supporting Marine Tourism on Kodingareng Keke Island, Makassar City. *International Journal of Applied Biology*, 7(1), 35-46.
- Das, M., & Chatterjee, B. (2015). Ecotourism: A panacea or a predicament? *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 14, 3-16.
- Ekpah, O. (2021). Wildlife status and ecotourism potentials of Lekki Conservation Centre, Lagos, Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship*, 2(4), 199-212.
- Faizal, A., Samawi, F., & Hamzah, H. (2016). Studi Awal: Desain Jejaring Kawasan Konservasi Perairan di Pantai Barat Sulawesi Selatan. *Jurnal Administrasi dan Kebijakan Kesehatan Indonesia*, 2(2), 110665.
- Febriandhika, I., & Kurniawan, T. (2019). Membingkai Konsep Pariwisata Yang Berkelanjutan Melalui Community-Based Tourism: Sebuah Review Literatur. *JPSI (Journal of Public Sector Innovations)*, 3(2), 50-56.
- Fennell, D. A. (2014). *Ecotourism*: Routledge.
- Foy, N. (1997). *Empowering People at Work*: Gower.
- Garrod, B., Wilson, J. C., & Bruce, D. M. (2003). Defining marine ecotourism: a Delphi study. *Marine Ecotourism: Issues and Experiences. Channel View, Clevedon, Australia*, 17-36.
- Gills, B. (2020). Deep restoration: From the great implosion to the great awakening (Vol. 17, pp. 577-579): Taylor & Francis.
- Goodwin, H. (1995). In pursuit of ecotourism.
- Haya, L. O. M. Y., & Fujii, M. (2019). Assessing economic values of coral reefs in the Pangkajene and Kepulauan Regency, Spermonde Archipelago, Indonesia. *Journal of coastal conservation*, 23(3), 699-711.
- Hui, X., Raza, S. H., Khan, S. W., Zaman, U., & Ogadimma, E. C. (2023). Exploring regenerative tourism using media richness theory: emerging role of immersive journalism, metaverse-based promotion, eco-literacy, and pro-environmental behavior. *Sustainability*, 15(6), 5046.
- Hung, K., Sirakaya-Turk, E., & Ingram, L. J. (2011). Testing the efficacy of an integrative model for community participation. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(3), 276-288.
- Jamal, T. B., & Getz, D. (1995). Collaboration theory and community tourism planning. *Annals of tourism research*, 22(1), 186-204.
- Kench, P. S., & Mann, T. (2017). Reef island evolution and dynamics: insights from the Indian and Pacific Oceans and perspectives for the Spermonde Archipelago. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 4, 145.
- Koroy, K., Yulianda, F., & Butet, N. A. (2017). PENGEMBANGAN EKOWISATA BAHARI BERBASIS SUMBERDAYA PULAU-PULAU KECIL DI PULAU SAYAFI DAN LIWO,

- KABUPATEN HALMAHERA TENGAH. *Jurnal Teknologi Perikanan Dan Kelautan*, 8(1), 1-17.
- Lamberti, L., Noci, G., Guo, J., & Zhu, S. (2011). Mega-events as drivers of community participation in developing countries: The case of Shanghai World Expo. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1474-1483.
- Milne, S., Thorburn, E., Rosin, C., & Deuchar, C. (2021). *Developing marine ecotourism for a sustainable blue economy: a literature review*. Retrieved from [https://www.sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz/assets/dms/Reports/Developing-marine-ecotourism-for-a-sustainable-blue-economy-a-literature-review-/Marine-ecotourism-literature-review\\_May-2021\\_For-Upload-to-WEB.pdf](https://www.sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz/assets/dms/Reports/Developing-marine-ecotourism-for-a-sustainable-blue-economy-a-literature-review-/Marine-ecotourism-literature-review_May-2021_For-Upload-to-WEB.pdf)
- Nickerson, N. P., Jorgenson, J., & Boley, B. B. (2016). Are sustainable tourists a higher spending market? *Tourism Management*, 54, 170-177.
- Orea-Giner, A., Gonzalez-Reverte, F., & Fuentes-Moraleda, L. (2022). Impacts of a health crisis on music festivals: a qualitative approach. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 13(2), 125-143.
- Pretty, J. (1995). The many interpretations of participation. *Focus*, 16, 4-5.
- Rani, C., Nessa, M. N., Jompa, J., Thoaha, S., & Faizal, A. (2014). Aplikasi model dinamik dampak eutrofikasi dan sedimentasi bagi pengendalian kerusakan terumbu karang di perairan Sulawesi Selatan. *Jurnal Perikanan Universitas Gadjah Mada*, 16(1), 1-9.
- Ratnah, R., Rinda, R., & Sarira, M. T. (2022). Strategi Pengembangan Gugusan Pulau-Pulau di Kepulauan Spermonde dalam Perencanaan Produk Perjalanan Wisata Berbasis Maritim. *La Geografia*, 20(3).
- Sadan, E. (1997). *Empowerment and Community Planning* (R. Flantz, Trans.): Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishers.
- Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management*, 20(2), 245-249.
- Steven, R., Castley, J. G., & Buckley, R. (2013). Tourism revenue as a conservation tool for threatened birds in protected areas. *PloS one*, 8(5), e62598.
- Stronza, A. L., Hunt, C. A., & Fitzgerald, L. A. (2019). Ecotourism for conservation? *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 44(1), 229-253.
- Tiimub, B. M., Gbolo, B., Tiimob, R. W., Tiimob, E. L., Kumedzro, V., & Tiimob, E. (2019). Impact of community participation in adaptive wildlife resources management at Mole National Park, Ghana. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship*, 1(2), 139-149.
- Tiimub, B. M., Kuffour, R. A., Tiimob, R. W., Kuuyeni, C. A., Tiimob, E. L., & Tiimob, E. N. (2020). Sacred groves as potential ecotourism sites at Tolon and Diare in Northern Region, Ghana. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship*, 1(3), 195-215.
- Timothy, D. J. (1999). Participatory planning A view of tourism in Indonesia. *Annals of tourism research*, 26(2), 371-391.
- Timothy, D. J. (2000). Building community awareness of tourism in a developing country destination. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 25(2), 111-116.
- Timothy, D. J. (2006). Empowerment and stakeholder participation in tourism destination communities *Tourism, power and space* (pp. 213-230): Routledge.
- Tosun, C. (2000). Limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries. *Tourism Management*, 21(6), 613-633.
- UN. (2021). The Rising Tide: Mapping Ocean Finance for a New Decade. Retrieved from <https://www.unepfi.org/publications/rising-tide/#:~:text=The%20Rising%20Tide%20report%20maps,and%20gaps%20in%20the%20market.>
- Wondirad, A. (2019). Does ecotourism contribute to sustainable destination development, or is it just a marketing hoax? Analyzing twenty-five years contested journey of ecotourism through a meta-analysis of tourism journal publications. *Asia pacific journal of tourism research*, 24(11), 1047-1065.
- Wood, D. J., & Gray, B. (1991). Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration. *The Journal of applied behavioral science*, 27(2), 139-162.

- Xu, H., Jiang, F., Wall, G., & Wang, Y. (2019). The evolving path of community participation in tourism in China. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(8), 1239-1258.
- Yeboah, T., Afram, C. S., Quampah, B., & Kulega, A. (2019). Adaptation to risks related to ecotourism: development at Boabeng in the Bono East Region, Ghana. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship*, 1(2), 105-121.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). Studi kasus: Desain & metode.
- Zakaria, A. (2021). Assessing the effectiveness of local community leaders in managing forest resources in the Mole National Park. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship*, 3(1), 1-16.