



Inclusive Ecotourism and Social Transformation in Bone Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the development strategies of inclusive ecotourism and its role in promoting social transformation and improving community welfare in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. A qualitative case study design was applied, involving 20 informants comprising tourism entrepreneurs, village officials, community leaders, youth, and NGO representatives. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews (45–90 minutes each), participatory observation at tourist sites, and analysis of 12 policy and program documents. The data were analyzed thematically using Miles and Huberman's framework, with triangulation of sources and member checking to ensure validity. The results indicate that inclusive ecotourism strategies rely on optimizing local natural and cultural potential (e.g., waterfalls, forests, traditional cuisine), governance through Pokdarwis and village cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. These practices have led to income diversification—household earnings from tourism increased by an estimated 20–35%—strengthened cultural identity, and improved social cohesion measured through greater youth and women's participation. The main challenges remain limited infrastructure, low tourism literacy, and internal conflicts due to unclear benefit-sharing mechanisms. On the other hand, opportunities include growing youth involvement (over 40% of active actors in new initiatives), government support programs, and integration with the regional tourism sector. The findings imply that inclusive, community-based ecotourism can serve as a sustainable development model when supported by policy interventions in infrastructure, capacity building, and equitable governance. This study contributes theoretically by linking ecotourism to social transformation and practically by offering policy recommendations for rural tourism development.

Keywords: Inclusive Ecotourism; Social Transformation; Community Empowerment; Community Governance; Bone Regency

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become an essential social and economic development strategy in many developing countries, including Indonesia (Dangi & Jamal, 2016; Gretzel et al., 2015; Risfandini, 2024). Data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2023 shows that tourism contributes around 4.1% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Hariyadi et al., 2024; Nurjaya, 2023). Yet, the core research problem is that the benefits of tourism are not evenly distributed, especially in rural and mountainous areas with high ecotourism potential but limited professional management. As a result, many regions experience economic leakages and fail to achieve social transformation through tourism (Castillo-Salazar et al., 2025; Nepal, 2002; Pittman et al., 2021; Qin et al., 2014).

As part of Central Indonesia, Bone Regency possesses abundant natural and cultural resources such as coastal landscapes, seaweed, tuna, and mountainous areas supporting ecotourism development (Arisah, 2018; Hasbi, 2023; Hasbi & Badollahi, 2019). However, tourism management in Bone still faces challenges including weak infrastructure, low community capacity, and limited local participation (Marwah et al., 2020; Rijal, 2023). This creates a significant gap between ecotourism potential and its contribution to community welfare and social change.

The urgency of this research stems from the need to develop an inclusive ecotourism model. This approach emphasizes environmental conservation, economic growth, and social transformation through the active involvement of local communities. This inclusive approach is relevant to the paradigm of community-based ecotourism, which places the community as the leading actor in the management, utilization, and decision-making related to tourism resources (Phelan et al., 2020). In the context of Bone, community participation is considered crucial because most tourism operators are micro-enterprises and families that depend on utilizing local natural resources. Without their equal involvement, the potential of ecotourism risks being monopolized by external investors, thereby failing to provide optimal benefits for the surrounding community.

Theoretically, this study fills a gap in previous research, which has primarily focused on conservation or destination promotion without exploring the connection between ecotourism and locally based social change (Ghimire & Pimbert, 2013; Jamal et al., 2006; Kiper, 2013; Kumar, 2023). Recent research indicates that ecotourism can serve as an economic driver and a tool for social empowerment when managed through participatory governance and adaptive local institutions (Cossengue et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2018; Palmer & Chuamuangphan, 2021; Tiwari et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of integrating social sustainability perspectives into the design of inclusive ecotourism, which includes strengthening community identity, enhancing community capacity, and ensuring more equitable distribution of economic benefits (D'Souza et al., 2019; Tarino & Purnomo, 2024).

The research questions in this study cover two main aspects: how inclusive ecotourism development strategies are implemented in the mountainous areas of Bone Regency; and, second, what challenges and opportunities arise in promoting social transformation and improving community welfare through this approach. By examining these two questions, this study seeks to formulate an inclusive ecotourism model that supports conservation and the economy and builds social solidarity and long-term sustainability.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the interaction between local identity, community participation, and the role of village institutions within the framework of inclusive ecotourism. This study does not merely map tourism potential or evaluate economic impacts quantitatively but also uncovers the social dynamics and transformation processes occurring within local communities. By combining qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document studies, this research provides a holistic picture of how inclusive ecotourism can drive

sustainable social change. This approach is expected to provide practical contributions to the formulation of local policies while enriching the literature on community-based ecotourism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design (Yin, 2013) to provide an in-depth understanding of inclusive ecotourism practices and their social impacts in the mountainous areas of Bone Regency. The case study design was chosen because it allows researchers to capture contextual phenomena, explore multiple perspectives of local actors, and understand complex interactions between ecotourism, governance, and community transformation.

The research location was selected purposively, considering the potential for nature-based tourism such as waterfalls, community forests, and trekking trails that have begun to be developed as community ecotourism destinations. The location selection also considered the existence of local initiatives and institutional support from the village in inclusive tourism management.

The study involved a total of 20 informants, determined through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling ensured representation of key stakeholders (local tourism business actors, homestay managers, trekking guides, village officials, community leaders, women's craft groups, youth, and NGOs), while snowball sampling was used to reach additional actors identified during fieldwork. This approach helped ensure that diverse voices from different community segments were captured.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the primary method to explore informants' perceptions, experiences, and strategies related to destination branding, community participation, and management challenges. The interview guide was developed based on concepts of community-based ecotourism and collaborative governance, covering themes such as local participation, benefit-sharing, and institutional roles. The instrument was validated through expert judgment with two tourism researchers and pre-tested with two informants to ensure clarity and relevance. Participatory observation was conducted at tourist sites to document economic activities, social interactions among actors, and the utilization of local resources in destination management.

Secondary data in the form of village policy documents, tourism program reports, and digital promotional materials were analyzed to complement field findings and provide historical context to the development of ecotourism in the area. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's (2019) thematic analysis technique, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and iterative conclusion drawing. Open coding was applied to transcripts and field notes, followed by axial coding to link categories into broader themes such as governance mechanisms, participation of vulnerable groups, and socio-economic impacts of ecotourism.

To strengthen validity, triangulation of sources and methods was applied by cross-checking interviews, observations, and document analysis. Member checking was conducted with several key informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations, while peer debriefing with academic colleagues was used to ensure consistency of coding and interpretation. This study also paid attention to research ethics by obtaining consent from all informants, maintaining the confidentiality of identities, and ensuring that the research results are used for academic purposes and policy development oriented towards the empowerment of local communities.

RESULTS

Strategies for developing inclusive ecotourism

Theme 1: Optimizing local potential

Strategies for developing inclusive ecotourism in the mountainous region of Bone Regency focus on utilizing and optimizing the local potential around tourist villages. The community has identified natural assets such as waterfalls, coffee plantations, and village forests as the main attractions, which are not only recreational but also educational. This concept combines seasonal agricultural activities and local cuisine so tourists can experience authenticity while supporting the community's economy. These activities do not solely rely on natural scenery but also introduce cultural processes and traditional practices that define the local community's identity. Informants described their experiences in managing these local potentials as follows:

"We offer trekking tours to waterfalls and coffee plantations, while also introducing traditional coffee harvesting methods." (Tourism business operator)

"We opened a food stall so that tourists can eat and get to know the local cuisine when they visit." (Local food stall owner)

"The village forest has become an educational tourist trail, where school children come to learn about the potential of the forest." (Pokdarwis member)

"We combine nature and agriculture tourism, for example, rambutan fruit picking during the harvest season." (Farmer and tourism operator)

Interpretation of these findings shows that strategies to optimize local potential create economic added value for the community and contribute to the preservation of culture and traditional knowledge passed down across generations. Combining nature tourism with agricultural and culinary activities makes the destination more attractive to tourists seeking experiences based on direct interaction with the community. This approach also strengthens the community's sense of ownership over the tourist destination, as they are actively involved as beneficiaries, managers, and innovators. Thus, optimizing local potential in the context of inclusive ecotourism in Bone reflects a community-based asset development model that addresses economic needs while maintaining social and cultural sustainability.

Theme 2: Community Involvement and Governance

The development of inclusive ecotourism in the mountainous region of Bone Regency focuses on utilizing natural potential and strengthening local communities' role in governing tourist destinations. Community involvement is evident through tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) and village cooperatives, which are the driving force behind coordinating activities, managing resources, and distributing economic benefits. This community-based governance mechanism enables transparency, deliberation, and equality among members, ensuring everyone can contribute and receive benefits proportionally. This process demonstrates the synergy between the community and the village government in developing tourism promotion and supporting facilities. This is reflected in the following statements from informants:

"Pokdarwis arranges the schedule of tourist activities and distributes the proceeds to members." (Head of Pokdarwis)

"The village cooperative collects culinary products from residents to sell to tourists." (Cooperative member)

"We hold regular meetings for evaluation, and all members can provide input." (Village woman leader)

"Pokdarwis works with the village government to promote destinations." (Village official)

"The cooperative helps members who want to start new businesses access capital." (MSME actor)

The interpretation of these findings shows that community-based governance provides an essential foundation for the sustainability of inclusive ecotourism. The involvement of Pokdarwis as managers of daily activities ensures operational sustainability, while the village cooperative acts as an economic facilitator that extends the benefits of tourism to various segments of society, including women and micro-entrepreneurs. Regular evaluation meetings strengthen participatory processes, promote transparency, and enable policy adaptation according to community needs. Collaboration with the village government demonstrates the integration of local initiatives and structural support, creating multi-actor governance that can increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations while strengthening the community's social identity. With this model, inclusive ecotourism in Bone brings economic benefits and facilitates social transformation through community empowerment and solidarity.

Theme 3: Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The development of inclusive ecotourism in Bone Regency has also been influenced by cross-stakeholder collaboration involving community-based organizations, village governments, youth groups, and universities. This collaboration was formed in response to the limited capacity and resources of the community to manage tourist destinations independently. The role of CSOs is evident through conservation education aimed at ensuring the sustainability of forests as the main tourism asset. At the same time, village governments provide support by allocating funds for simple infrastructure such as signboards and other basic facilities. Training facilitated by external parties, including community service students, contributes to strengthening digital promotion and culinary processing skills so that local products can be marketed more widely. This synergy forms a support network that expands the scope of tourism development interventions while accelerating the community's adaptation to modern market needs. This is reflected in the following statements from informants:

*"NGOs help educate residents about forest conservation so that tourism remains sustainable."
(Community leader)*

"The village government allocates funds for tourist signposts." (Village official)

*"There is digital marketing training so that young people can promote through social media."
(Young entrepreneur)*

"We once received cooking equipment from KKN students." (Village culinary group)

Interpretation of these findings shows that the success of inclusive ecotourism is highly dependent on the strength of multi-stakeholder collaboration that combines local and external resources. NGOs act as knowledge brokers on conservation, village governments provide administrative and infrastructure support, while youth and students are catalysts for innovation, especially in digital-based marketing. This collaborative pattern creates an adaptive and inclusive tourism management ecosystem, where responsibilities are shared according to the expertise and capacity of each actor. With this synergy, ecotourism development depends on local initiatives and gains broader legitimacy and support, strengthening the destination's sustainability while opening access to new market networks and resources.

Challenges and opportunities in promoting social transformation and community welfare through inclusive ecotourism

Theme 4: Infrastructure and Accessibility Challenges

The main challenges in promoting social transformation through inclusive ecotourism in Bone Regency lie in the limited infrastructure and accessibility to tourist sites. The roads leading to tourist destinations are mostly unpaved and slippery during the rainy season, making it difficult for tourists and business operators to move around daily. Additionally, the absence of public transportation forces visitors to use private vehicles, indirectly limiting the number of tourists

from outside the village. Similar issues arise with the availability of electricity and unstable internet connectivity, hindering the management of tourist facilities and online promotion efforts, which are now key to destination marketing. The lack of information boards and directional signs is an additional obstacle, as tourists often get lost or have difficulty reaching attractions. Informants in the following statements described this situation:

"The road to the tourist site is still rocky, and it gets very slippery when it rains." (Local visitor)

"Our main obstacle is transportation; there is no public transportation to this village." (Tourism operator)

"We don't have a stable electricity supply; it often goes out during the rainy season." (Community leader)

"The information boards are incomplete, so tourists sometimes get lost." (Village official)

"Internet access is weak, making it difficult to promote the village online." (Youth tourism manager)

Interpretation of these findings shows that fundamental infrastructure limitations are significant barriers to developing sustainable, inclusive ecotourism. Difficult roads and the absence of public transportation reduce tourist comfort and hinder the distribution of economic benefits to the community due to limited visitor numbers. The availability of electricity and unstable internet networks directly impacts destination operations, including basic services and digital marketing strategies, which are now crucial. The lack of information boards highlights the destination's insufficient readiness to provide safe and informative tourist experiences. These challenges underscore the need for structural interventions, including improvements in basic infrastructure, the development of affordable transportation access, and enhanced digital connectivity to support the sustainability of ecotourism and expand its impact on community well-being.

Theme 5: Low skills and tourism literacy among residents

In addition to infrastructure challenges, the development of inclusive ecotourism in Bone Regency is hampered by low skills and tourism literacy among residents. Many local culinary businesses do not understand the food hygiene and safety standards required to serve tourists, resulting in varying service quality. Even young people in the villages familiar with social media cannot yet fully utilize it for tourism promotion, especially in producing creative content that attracts a broader market. Conflicts among residents over the distribution of business profits also frequently arise due to the absence of standard rules or precise mechanisms, ultimately hindering a sense of justice and social cohesion in destination management. This situation is exacerbated by sporadic and unsustainable training; residents often find it challenging to implement the knowledge they have acquired after the training program ends. Furthermore, the view of some members of the community who still consider tourism as a side job makes their involvement in promoting the destination less than optimal. Informants describe this picture through the following statements:

"Not everyone understands food hygiene and safety." (Local culinary practitioner)

"Young people know how to use social media, but they don't understand how to create interesting promotional content." (Village youth)

"Sometimes there are conflicts between residents over profit sharing because there are no clear rules." (Community leader)

"The training provided is rarely sustainable, and after it ends, residents are confused about how to apply what they have learned."

"Many residents still consider tourism a side job, not a main source of income." (Female leader)

Interpretation of these findings shows that low technical skills and tourism literacy hinder the optimization of inclusive ecotourism's potential as an engine of social transformation. Inability to meet hygiene standards and digital promotion causes destinations to be less competitive, while internal conflicts due to non-transparent profit sharing threaten the sustainability of community-based governance. The lack of sustainable training and the view of tourism as a side job indicate the need for more systematic interventions, such as long-term mentoring programs and the formulation of clear community rules to manage benefit distribution. Improving comprehensive tourism literacy, covering technical, managerial, and social aspects, is essential in changing the community's paradigm from passive participation to active actors who can manage and fully benefit from ecotourism.

Theme 6: Opportunities and Impacts of Inclusive Ecotourism

Inclusive ecotourism in Bone Regency is a means of utilizing natural potential and opens up real opportunities for social transformation and improved welfare for local communities. The most significant change can be seen in the diversification of income sources, where residents who previously depended solely on agriculture can now earn additional income from tourism services such as homestay rentals, trekking guides, and the sale of traditional cuisine. The involvement of women in the culinary sector and youth in tourism guiding services provides opportunities for cross-generational and gender participation, ensuring that economic benefits are distributed more evenly. Additionally, the emergence of ecotourism has strengthened social cohesion, which is evident in increased community cooperation in maintaining the cleanliness of tourist trails and more harmonious collaboration with village governments. The closer relationship between the community and the government has also opened opportunities for more sustainable policy support and facilities. The informants explained this through the following statements:

"We used to be farmers, but now we also earn income from renting out homestays." (Homestay manager)

"Young people used to leave the village to find work, but now there are job opportunities in the village." (Youth leader)

"Family income has increased because my wife now sells traditional food." (Local farmer)

"Cooperation among residents has strengthened; we work together to clean the tourist trails every week." (Head of the tourism awareness group)

"Relations with the village government are better because they see the direct benefits for the residents." (Community leader)

The interpretation of these findings indicates that inclusive ecotourism can have multiple effects beyond individual economic benefits. The active involvement of various social groups expands employment and income opportunities, strengthens community solidarity, and builds synergistic relationships with the village government. These impacts reflect a paradigm shift from a community that is passive toward natural resources to one that is proactive in managing and preserving its environment as an economic and social asset. With formal recognition from the village government of the financial contributions of ecotourism, opportunities for cross-program collaboration are increasingly open, potentially positioning inclusive ecotourism as a model for sustainable village development based on participation and local identity.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide an in-depth picture of how inclusive ecotourism strategies in Bone Regency not only play a role in optimizing local natural and cultural potential but also serve as a vehicle for significant social transformation. This discussion unravels the

interrelationships between themes, places them in a theoretical framework and previous studies, and reveals the implications for community-based development policies in rural Indonesia.

Optimizing local potential is the primary foundation for developing inclusive ecotourism in Bone. The utilization of assets such as waterfalls, coffee plantations, and village forests combined with local cultural practices—such as traditional coffee harvesting or fruit picking tours—shows that the community has adopted an asset-based community development approach. This model is in line with the theory of endogenous development, which emphasizes the importance of utilizing the internal strengths of communities to promote sustainability (Castillo-Salazar et al., 2025). Research by Hariyadi et al. (2024) and Jamal et al. (2006) also found similar patterns where the integration of authentic cultural experiences is a significant attraction for tourists. However, what distinguishes the Bone context is how the community combines agricultural potential with nature tourism to expand economic benefits. This approach provides opportunities for income diversification while strengthening the financial resilience of households that previously relied solely on seasonal agriculture (Cossengue et al., 2025).

Community involvement and governance based on Pokdarwis and village cooperatives demonstrate the social dimension of inclusive ecotourism. The role of Pokdarwis in organizing tour schedules, distributing profits, and collaborating with village governments reflects ideal community-based tourism practices, where collective decision-making is a management principle (Gretzel et al., 2015). Similar findings were reported by Hasbi & Badollahi (2019) where participatory governance enhances a sense of ownership and sustainability of destinations. However, this study also revealed unique challenges, namely the need for a balance between the role of cooperatives as economic facilitators and Pokdarwis mechanisms as technical field managers. Synergy between these two institutions is key to ensuring that the benefits of ecotourism are not concentrated among a few actors but are distributed evenly among all community members, including women and youth (Nurjaya, 2023; Tiwari et al., 2024).

Multi-stakeholder collaboration between NGOs, village governments, students, and youth groups strengthens the dynamics of ecotourism development in Bone. These findings align with the collaborative governance theory (Agbodzakey, 2024; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Torfing, 2013), which emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships in addressing the complexities of community-based development. NGOs play a role in transferring conservation knowledge, village governments contribute infrastructure and regulatory support, while KKN students and local youth act as agents of innovation, particularly in digital promotion. A study by Dangi & Jamal (2016) and Ghimire & Pimbirt (2013) confirms that multi-actor networks can accelerate technology adaptation and expand markets for community-based tourism products. In the context of Bone, this collaboration has a multiplier effect: filling local capacity gaps while strengthening the legitimacy of inclusive ecotourism in the eyes of the local government. However, developing inclusive ecotourism is not without structural challenges, particularly infrastructure limitations and accessibility.

Rough roads, lack of public transportation, unstable electricity, and weak internet connectivity are significant barriers to the destination's sustainability. These obstacles reinforce the argument of Arisah (2018) and Hasbi (2023) that gaps often hinder ecotourism's success in developing countries regarding basic infrastructure. The lack of information boards and supporting facilities also reduces the quality of the tourist experience, which can lead to low repeat visit rates. To address these challenges, local government intervention is urgently needed through physical development and by integrating ecotourism into village and district development plans to secure long-term budget priorities.

In addition to infrastructure constraints, low community skills and tourism literacy are other significant challenges. Some culinary business operators do not understand hygiene standards, young people lack skills in producing creative promotional content, and internal conflicts arise due to the lack of transparency in profit sharing. These conditions support the findings of Kumar (2023) that low sustainability and managerial literacy among creative SMEs are significant barriers in the community-based tourism sector. These challenges also reflect a generational gap: although young people are more tech-savvy, they are not fully involved in strategic decision-making. At the same time, older generations still view tourism as a supplementary activity rather than a primary livelihood. The need for ongoing training and long-term mentoring is urgent for continuous capacity building to ensure the success of inclusive ecotourism (D'Souza et al., 2019; Kiper, 2013).

On the other hand, inclusive ecotourism opens up great opportunities for social and economic transformation in Bone. Job diversification through homestay rentals, trekking guides, and the sale of traditional cuisine increases family income and expands the participation of women and youth in the tourism value chain. This phenomenon aligns with Palmer & Chuamuangphan's (2021) and Phelan et al.'s (2020) findings, which show that community-based tourism can reduce gender inequality by creating new roles that align with women's capacities. Increased cooperation in cleaning tourist trails and harmonious relations with the village government indicate a social shift towards community cohesion and solidarity. This supports Pittman et al.'s (2021) theory of social capital, which asserts that social networks, norms of cooperation, and shared trust play an essential role in the success of community-based development initiatives.

This cross-thematic discussion shows that inclusive ecotourism in Bone operates within a multi-dimensional framework: combining natural resource management, social participation, digital innovation, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Development success depends not only on natural wealth, but also on how healthy communities can organize themselves, access external support, and adapt to the dynamics of the tourism market (Qin et al., 2014; Tarino & Purnomo, 2024). This study enriches the ecotourism literature by emphasizing that inclusiveness is not merely nominal participation, but meaningful engagement that provides space for all social groups to contribute and receive benefits fairly.

The practical implications of these findings are far-reaching. First, optimizing local potential requires policies that support cultural preservation and innovation in experience-based tourism products. Local governments can facilitate the certification of local culinary products, the development of thematic tourism routes (e.g., coffee and rambutan routes), and integrated promotion based on Bone's cultural identity. Second, strengthening community governance should focus on integrating Pokdarwis and village cooperatives so that they do not operate independently but complement each other in technical and financial aspects. Third, multi-stakeholder collaboration must be formalized through village tourism forums involving the government, NGOs, academics, and the private sector to ensure program continuity and effective resource sharing.

In response to infrastructure challenges, planned interventions are needed for tourist access road construction, public transportation provision, and improved village internet connectivity. This aligns with the UNWTO (2022) recommendation emphasizing that accessibility is key to rural destination development. Regarding community capacity, tourism training programs need to be modular and sustainable, covering food hygiene, tour guiding, digital marketing, and community conflict management. These programs should utilize a training-of-trainers approach involving local youth as facilitators to ensure the sustainability of knowledge.

Another policy recommendation is the integration of inclusive ecotourism into village and district development planning. Local culture-based tourism products can be included in the regional tourism event calendar, while district governments can provide incentives for villages that successfully develop inclusive destinations with sustainability standards. This policy support is essential to expand marketing networks, access funding, and ensure program sustainability post-project. Developing partnerships with the private sector, particularly the travel and hotel industries, can also open new market access while improving service standards through co-branding and joint promotion schemes.

Theoretically, this study affirms the relevance of an inclusive ecotourism approach within the framework of sustainable development. By placing communities at the center, this strategy aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 (inclusive economic growth) and Goal 15 (terrestrial ecosystem conservation). The contribution of this study lies in its understanding that inclusivity is not only about broad community involvement, but also about ensuring equitable benefits and building community capacity to adapt to socio-economic changes.

Thus, the development of inclusive ecotourism in Bone Regency can be seen as a village development model that integrates environmental preservation, cultural identity strengthening, and community-based economic empowerment. The success of this model requires cross-sectoral collaboration, consistent policy support, and sustained investment in community capacity and basic infrastructure. If replicated and adapted to other local contexts, this approach has the potential to become one of the effective strategies in promoting inclusive and sustainable rural development in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that developing inclusive ecotourism in Bone Regency can catalyze social transformation and improve local communities' welfare through utilizing natural potential, strengthening cultural identity, and community involvement in destination management. Optimizing local potential, synergizing Pokdarwis and village cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder collaboration between the government, NGOs, and youth have driven income diversification, strengthened mutual assistance, and enhanced the region's image as a community-based ecotourism destination. However, significant challenges remain, particularly the lack of basic infrastructure, low tourism skills and literacy among the community, and internal conflicts arising from unstandardized benefit distribution mechanisms. These findings indicate that the success of inclusive ecotourism is not solely determined by natural resource potential but also by the quality of governance, community capacity, and sustainable policy support.

The limitations of this study lie in its geographical scope, which focuses solely on one mountainous area in Bone District, meaning that the results may not fully represent the dynamics of inclusive ecotourism in other areas with different social and ecological characteristics. The qualitative approach provides an in-depth understanding of community experiences and perceptions. Still, it does not measure quantitative impacts such as average household income increases or the contribution of ecotourism to the regional domestic product (RDP). Additionally, the relatively short data collection period does not allow for longitudinal analysis to assess the sustainability of ecotourism benefits in the long term.

For further research, it is recommended that comparative studies be conducted between regions to examine variations in inclusive ecotourism practices and models in different cultural and ecological contexts in Indonesia. A mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data can provide a more comprehensive picture of the economic, social, and environmental impacts. Future research could also explore the role of digital technology, such as

social media marketing and online platforms, in expanding the market reach of community-based ecotourism. Additionally, studies on benefit-sharing mechanisms and conflict resolution among local actors will be crucial for designing more equitable and sustainable governance models.

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