

The Level of Local Community Involvement in Sustainable Tourism Marketing of the World Coral Triangle in Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia



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<https://doi.org/10.18280/ijstdp.191230>

ABSTRACT

Received: 29 September 2024

Revised: 25 November 2024

Accepted: 5 December 2024

Available online: 30 December 2024

Keywords:

community involvement, infrastructure development, natural resource availability, sustainable tourism, tourism marketing, Wakatobi National Park

This study examines the extent of local community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing in Wakatobi National Park, Indonesia. The research aims to identify the primary factors influencing active participation in tourism marketing efforts. Using a quantitative methodology, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to local community members and analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results show that the availability of natural resources, local infrastructure development, and stakeholder cooperation significantly increases public awareness of economic potential and fosters positive perceptions of tourism. In contrast, transportation accessibility and positive perceptions of tourism did not significantly affect active community participation. The study concludes that increasing public awareness of the economic benefits of tourism and improving local infrastructure are essential to encourage greater community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing. These findings provide practical recommendations for policymakers and tourism stakeholders to more effectively engage local communities in sustainable tourism development and ensure that tourism activities benefit both the local economy and the environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become essential to preserving natural ecosystems while supporting local economies [1, 2], especially in ecologically sensitive areas such as the Coral Triangle [3]. Known as the world's epicenter of marine biodiversity, the Coral Triangle spans six countries, including Indonesia, and Wakatobi National Park is recognized as one of its key sites. This park is rich in marine life and a thriving site for tourism, contributing to local livelihoods and national income [4]. However, balancing tourism growth with environmental conservation requires a nuanced approach, particularly involving local communities in marketing efforts. Their participation is critical, as they are the primary stewards of the natural environment and custodians of indigenous knowledge. Understanding how local communities engage in sustainable tourism marketing efforts is essential to promoting economically beneficial and ecologically responsible tourism.

Despite the recognized importance of community participation in sustainable tourism, the extent and effectiveness of local community involvement in tourism marketing within Wakatobi National Park remains underexplored. Although the region is celebrated as a premier diving destination within the Coral Triangle, the key challenge is to enable local communities to actively contribute to and benefit from tourism without compromising environmental integrity. Current tourism marketing strategies often fail to

adequately incorporate local perspectives, knowledge and resources, resulting in a disconnect between conservation goals and the economic needs of local residents [5]. This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating how local community engagement can enhance tourism marketing efforts to ensure both environmental sustainability and economic benefits.

While previous studies on sustainable tourism in the Coral Triangle, including Wakatobi National Park, have focused primarily on conservation measures and policy frameworks [6, 7], there is a notable lack of comprehensive research on the role of local communities in tourism marketing. The existing literature often overlooks how local communities can effectively participate in and shape sustainable tourism marketing strategies, particularly in marine biodiversity hotspots [8]. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing specific insights into the potential for community-driven marketing initiatives and their impact on both economic development and environmental conservation.

To address these issues, this research uses a combination of survey methods and advanced analytical techniques to measure community involvement in tourism marketing. By fostering partnerships between local governments, tourism operators, and community organizations [9], the study aims to create marketing campaigns that reflect both conservation goals and local economic aspirations. This approach includes the implementation of training programs, capacity building

initiatives, and inclusive decision-making processes to enhance community participation [10]. By integrating local communities into the marketing narrative, this research contributes to positioning tourism in Wakatobi as a sustainable business opportunity and a tool for protecting environmental and cultural heritage.

This study is motivated by the need to bridge the gap between sustainable tourism marketing and local community participation in Wakatobi National Park. Given the lack of community representation in tourism promotion, it is crucial to investigate how regional stakeholders can be empowered to participate in marketing [11]. The rich marine biodiversity of the Coral Triangle, particularly Wakatobi, provides a unique opportunity to explore how tourism can be marketed in a way that is consistent with both conservation and community development. This research aims to provide insights into the mechanisms by which local involvement can lead to more sustainable tourism outcomes.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the level of local community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing within Wakatobi National Park, focusing on the factors that promote active participation. Specifically, the study will examine how transportation accessibility, natural resource availability, and local infrastructure development contribute to public awareness of the economic potential of tourism and how this awareness translates into active community participation. In addition, the research will examine how stakeholder collaboration and the availability of education and training influence the local community's positive perception of tourism and encourage greater participation in marketing efforts. Objectives include evaluating the effectiveness of current marketing strategies, identifying barriers to community engagement, and developing a framework for integrating local knowledge and values into sustainable tourism marketing. This framework will address how public awareness and perceptions impact participation and provide strategies to promote more inclusive community involvement. This research answers seven hypotheses:

- H1:** *Transportation accessibility positively influences public awareness of the economic potential of tourism.*
- H2:** *The availability of natural resources will increase public awareness of the economic potential of tourism.*
- H3:** *Local infrastructure development will increase public awareness of the economic potential of tourism.*
- H4:** *Stakeholder cooperation positively influences community perceptions of tourism.*
- H5:** *Availability of education and training positively influences community perceptions of tourism.*
- H6:** *Public awareness of the economic potential of tourism leads to active community participation in tourism marketing.*
- H7:** *A positive perception of tourism leads to active participation of local communities in tourism marketing.*

This research is significant because it examines the critical factors that influence public awareness of the economic potential of tourism and community perceptions of tourism in Wakatobi National Park. By testing hypotheses related to transportation accessibility, natural resource availability, infrastructure development, stakeholder collaboration, and education and training availability, the study aims to comprehensively understand what drives local community involvement in tourism marketing. The findings could guide

policy makers, tourism operators and conservationists in developing strategies that balance economic growth with ecological conservation by promoting sustainable, community-based tourism marketing. In addition, the research will empower local communities by identifying the factors that promote their active participation and provide them with opportunities to take ownership of tourism marketing efforts, thereby enhancing their economic benefits while ensuring the conservation of Wakatobi's natural environment.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Study and data collection

This research used survey methods, both online and offline, to collect data [12], from the people of Wakatobi Regency. The use of both online and offline surveys was chosen to ensure a broader representation of different community groups, given the varying levels of access to technology and the internet in the area. The online survey was chosen to reach respondents who actively use the internet and social media, particularly popular platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp [13]. These platforms were chosen because they have many users in Indonesia, including in the Wakatobi Regency, allowing the survey to be distributed more effectively and efficiently (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondent demographic information

Respondents		N = 136	
		Number	Percent
Gender	Male	65	47.79%
	Female	71	52.21%
Age	<25	69	50.74%
	26-35	43	31.62%
	36-45	12	8.82%
	>46	13	9.56%
Education	Below high school	2	1.47%
	Senior high school	76	55.88%
	Bachelor	55	40.44%
	Graduate	3	2.21%

Source: Author's processing, 2024

In order to obtain a more comprehensive representation of the population on Wanci Island, Wakatobi Regency, the survey method employed in this study combined online and offline surveys. This location was selected for its strategic positioning as the inaugural point of departure for tourists engaged in snorkeling activities within the World Coral Triangle, situated within the Wakatobi National Park. An online survey was conducted to reach respondents with internet access, while an offline survey was conducted in person using paper and pencil to reach those without internet access, particularly the elderly and low-income communities.

In the face-to-face survey, data was collected from 14 respondents, the majority of whom were older individuals with low levels of education and income. This approach is designed to ensure that the views of all segments of society are represented in the data collected. The data obtained from the two methods were integrated, resulting in a total of 136 responses that encompassed a diverse range of social, economic, and technological backgrounds on Wanci Island. The sample size was determined based on the availability of respondents and the need to achieve diversity in the sample.

Given the focus on Wanci Island as a strategic location for this research, the population of 136 respondents already represents a sufficient sample size for gaining comprehensive insights into the challenges and perspectives faced by communities in this region.

2.2 Questionnaire design and measurement

The variables used in this study were selected for their relevance to the key factors influencing local community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing. These research variables were considered based on previous literature highlighting the importance of each element in developing community-engaged tourism. The selection of these variables is based on prior research suggesting that transport, availability of natural resources, infrastructure, and stakeholder collaboration are key drivers of local community involvement in tourism destination development [14, 15]. In addition, community awareness of economic potential,

availability of education and training, and positive perceptions of tourism play an important role in encouraging active community participation in tourism marketing (refer to Table 2).

The indicators selected in the questionnaire were developed from previous research questions used to assess these factors in different sustainable tourism contexts. For example, transport accessibility indicator includes questions on how transport access affects community participation. At the same time, natural resource availability assesses how local natural resources play a role in attracting communities to engage in tourism. Other indicators, such as Stakeholder Collaboration, were adapted from studies that examined stakeholder collaboration in the development of sustainable tourism destinations and then adapted to measure the specific context of Wakatobi. By adopting and adapting questions from previous studies, this research aims to better understand how each factor contributes to community engagement in tourism marketing in the Wakatobi National Park area.

Table 2. Description of research variables

Variable	Indicator	References
Active Participation of Local Communities (APLC)	How often do you take part in meetings about tourism in your community?	[16, 17]
	Are you actively involved in destination development projects in your region?	[18, 19]
	How much do you get involved in deciding about your neighborhood's tourist destinations?	[20]
	How can people be involved in tourism planning to improve quality of life?	[21]
Education and Training Availability (ETA)	Can you get training in tourism in your area?	[22, 23]
	Do you think local communities should get training in tourism?	[24, 25]
	Do you think tourism training can create jobs in your area?	[26, 27]
	Would you like to take a tourism course in your area?	[28, 29]
	Do you think local government, NGOs and communities should work together to make a tourist destination a success?	[30-32]
Local Infrastructure Development (LID)	How does stakeholder cooperation affect the implementation of tourism development plans?	[33, 34]
	What are the effects of inclusive governance and stakeholder collaboration on tourism sustainability?	[35, 36]
	Can working together help local communities in developing tourist destinations?	[37-39]
Natural Resource Availability (NRA)	How often do you see local government, NGOs and communities working together to develop your area?	[40-42]
	How important are local natural resources in your decision to get involved in tourism?	[43-45]
	Will good management of natural resources make tourist destinations more attractive?	[44, 46, 47]
	Is saving resources important when developing sustainable tourist destinations?	[48-51]
	How important are natural resources for developing tourist destinations in your area?	[44, 52, 53]
Public Awareness of Economic Potential (PAEP)	How can tourism benefit your area economically?	[54-56]
	How much do you help make money from tourism in your area?	[57, 58]
	How has tourism affected jobs in your area?	[59]
	Do you feel that revenue generated from tourism can help improve infrastructure and public services in your community?	[60]
	Can tourism help local communities with substantial income effects?	[61, 62]
	Has tourism had a positive impact on your region's image or reputation?	[63-65]
	Has the development of tourist destinations increased the attractiveness of your area as a tourist destination?	[66]
Positive Perception of Tourism (PPT)	Has the community's pride in their region been enhanced by efforts to develop the destination?	[67]
	Does the development of tourist destinations affect your view of the potential for growth in your area?	[63, 68]
	Has the development of tourist destinations changed people's views of your area to be more positive?	[69]
	How often do you see local government, NGOs and communities working together to develop tourism areas?	[70-72]
Stakeholders Collaboration (SC)	Do you believe that the tourism industry has the potential to increase the economic income of local communities?	[66]
	How much do you help make money from tourism in your area?	[73, 74]
	Can income from tourism help improve infrastructure and public services in your community?	[75, 76]
Transport Accessibility (TC)	How important is efficient public transport to your participation in destination development?	[77-79]
	Would better transport help you get more involved in developing tourist destinations?	[14, 80, 81]
	Is transport a problem for you in developing tourist destinations in your area?	[82, 83]

Source: Author's processing, 2024

3. RESULTS

3.1 Reliability and validity

In this study, reliability and validity assessment is an important aspect of ensuring that the instruments used to measure local community participation [84], in sustainable tourism marketing in Wakatobi National Park are reliable and accurate. Reliability, measured by Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR), assesses the internal consistency of the constructs used. A high Cronbach's alpha value indicates that the items within a construct are similar in measuring the variable in question [85]. Meanwhile, CR is used to confirm whether the overall construct has a high degree of reliability in measurement [86]. An adequate reliability value should generally be greater than 0.7 to be considered satisfactory.

For validity, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to assess convergent validity, which is the extent to which construct indicators are highly correlated. An AVE value greater than 0.5 indicates that the construct in question can explain more than half of the variance in the indicators, thus supporting convergent validity. In addition, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated to assess potential multicollinearity problems between the constructs. A VIF value below the critical limit of 5, as in this study, where the average is 2.068, indicates no significant multicollinearity problem exists. This is important to ensure that the predictor

variables in the model are not highly correlated, which could skew the analysis results.

Table 3 shows the measurement results regarding AVE, CR, and CA for several constructs used in this study. Each construct consists of several items with loading values indicating the relationship between them and their constructs. The AVE, CR, and CA values are used to assess the convergent validity and reliability of the instrument, respectively. This table shows that each construct meets the reliability and validity criteria required in the study. AVE values above 0.5 indicate that the related constructs can explain most of the variance of the items used. In contrast, high CR values indicate that all these constructs have a high internal consistency. This adds confidence that this research instrument is valid and reliable enough to analyze local community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing in Wakatobi.

As shown in Table 4, the AVE values range from 0.617 to 0.779, which meets the requirement of $AVE > 0.5$ [87]. The CR values of the latent constructs are between 0.842 and 0.946. These results confirm the reliability and internal consistency of the measures. The Cronbach's alpha values for all variables are between 0.725 and 0.929. Furthermore, Table 4 shows that the correlation between each pair of constructs is less than the square root of the AVE of each construct, confirming the discriminant validity of this model.

Table 3. AVE, CR, and CA

Construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR	CA
Active participation of local communities	APLC_1	0.810	0.643	0.878	0.813
	APLC_2	0.837			
	APLC_3	0.851			
	APLC_4	0.700			
Education and training availability	ETA_1	0.646	0.630	0.871	0.799
	ETA_2	0.891			
	ETA_3	0.818			
	ETA_4	0.800			
Local infrastructure development	LID_1	0.728	0.613	0.888	0.843
	LID_2	0.816			
	LID_3	0.803			
	LID_4	0.796			
	LID_5	0.769			
Natural resource availability	NRA_1	0.792	0.654	0.883	0.823
	NRA_2	0.753			
	NRA_3	0.840			
	NRA_4	0.846			
Public awareness of economic potential	PAEP_1	0.770	0.779	0.946	0.929
	PAEP_2	0.784			
	PAEP_3	0.699			
	PAEP_4	0.810			
	PAEP_5	0.866			
Positive perception of tourism	PPT_1	0.849	0.620	0.891	0.846
	PPT_2	0.892			
	PPT_3	0.915			
	PPT_4	0.902			
	PPT_5	0.852			
Stakeholders collaboration	SC_1	0.783	0.617	0.889	0.843
	SC_2	0.648			
	SC_3	0.875			
	SC_4	0.823			
	SC_5	0.780			
Transport accessibility	TC_1	0.843	0.641	0.842	0.725
	TC_2	0.823			
	TC_3	0.732			

Source: Author's processing, 2024

Table 4 shows that no bivariate correlation coefficient is higher than 0.882, which is below the threshold of 0.9. All variance inflation factors (VIF) of the dimensions in the research model are below 3.5, indicating that multicollinearity is not a significant issue in these formative constructs. Next, we examined the path significance of each dimension forming the formative construct to the second-order construct. Based on the empirical results, each dimension in the model significantly explains the variance of the corresponding construct, as indicated by the significant paths in the research model figure.

As shown in Figure 1, the empirical results support the five dimensions that influence local community engagement. Each dimension significantly explains the variance of the

corresponding construct in this model. The formative relationships of the five dimensions are as follows: transport accessibility (TA) significantly influences Public Awareness of Economic Potential with a path value of 0.118. At the same time, natural resource availability (NRA) shows a stronger influence with a path value of 0.425. In addition, local infrastructure development (LID) also made a significant contribution with a path value of 0.393. On the other hand, education and training availability (ETA) and stakeholder cooperation (SC) significantly influenced positive perceptions of tourism, with path values of 0.486 and 0.343, respectively. Combining these dimensions provides empirical support for community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing in Wakatobi National Park.

Table 4. Correlation matrix with the square root of the Average Variance Extracted on the diagonal

	MEAN	STUDEV	APLC	ETA	LID	NRA	PPT	PAEC	SC	TA
APLC	0.061	0.070	0.802							
ETA	0.487	0.140	0.565	0.794						
LID	0.198	0.072	0.587	0.771	0.783					
NRA	0.385	0.087	0.476	0.778	0.702	0.809				
PPT	0.216	0.061	0.530	0.731	0.737	0.640	0.882			
PAEC	0.432	0.103	0.600	0.797	0.758	0.784	0.807	0.788		
SC	0.127	0.127	0.632	0.714	0.713	0.759	0.690	0.760	0.785	
TA	0.505	0.111	0.495	0.606	0.567	0.705	0.583	0.640	0.667	0.801

Notes: MEAN: Average Value; STDEV: Standard Deviation; APLC: Active Participation of Local Communities; ETA: Education and Training Availability; LID: Local Infrastructure Development; NRA: Natural Resource Availability; PPT: Positive Perception of Tourism; PAEC: Public Awareness of Economic Potential; SC: Stakeholders Collaboration; TA: Transport Accessibility.

Source: Author's processing, 2024

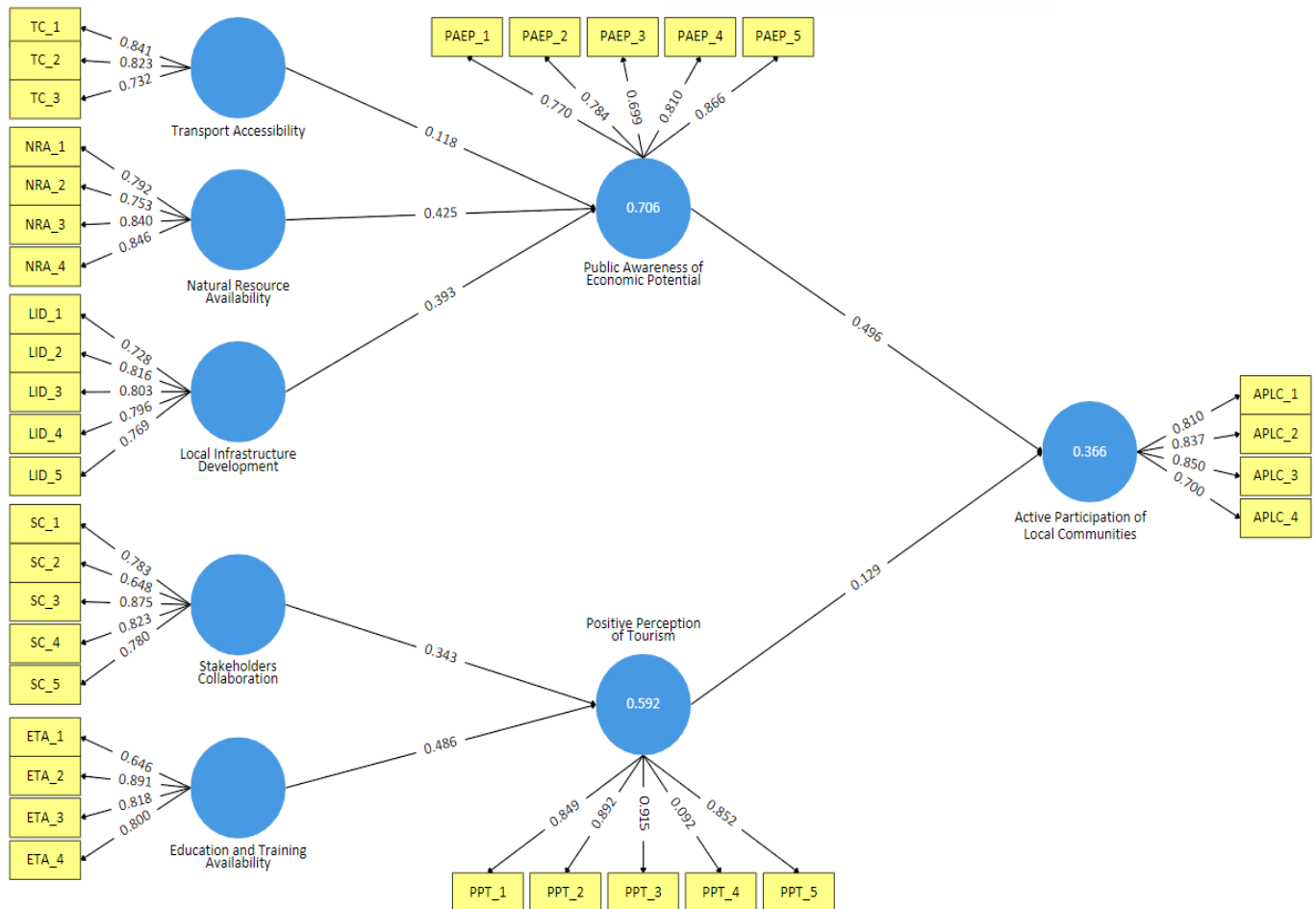


Figure 1. Structural model (path coefficient)

Source: Author's processing, 2024

3.2 Hypothesis testing

After ensuring sufficient validity and reliability, the researchers tested the proposed research model using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. Figure 1 shows the structural relationships between the latent variables with path coefficient and R-square values for the main constructs. For example, Public Awareness of Economic Potential (PAEP) has an R-square value of 0.706, which indicates that 70.6% of

the variability in this construct can be explained by the variables that influence it, such as transportation accessibility, natural resource availability, and local infrastructure development. Positive Perception of Tourism (PPT) has an R-square of 0.592, while active participation of local communities (APLC) has an R-square of 0.366, indicating that the variability in local community involvement can also be explained by the factors in the model, although with a lower contribution.

Table 5. Summary of results

Path Coefficient	STDEV	T	Values	H	Decision
The effect of transportation accessibility on public awareness of economic potential	0.080	1.377	0.169	H1	Rejected
The effect of natural resource availability on public awareness of economic potential	0.103	4.157	0.000	H2	Accepted
The effect of local infrastructure development on public awareness of economic potential	0.087	4.510	0.000	H3	Accepted
The effect of stakeholders collaboration on positive perception of tourism	0.138	2.479	0.013	H4	Accepted
The effect of education and training availability on positive perception of tourism	0.140	3.465	0.001	H5	Accepted
The effect of public awareness of economic potential on active participation of local communities	0.111	4.475	0.000	H6	Accepted
The effect of positive perception of tourism on active participation of local communities	0.127	1.021	0.308	H7	Rejected

Notes: STDEV: Standard Deviation, T: Statistics, H: Hypothesis
Source: Author's processing, 2024

Table 5 summarizes the hypothesis test results, indicating whether the hypothesized causal pathways are significant. Hypotheses H2 through H6 are accepted because the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between the tested variables. For example, hypothesis H2, which states that the availability of natural resources affects public awareness of economic potential, is accepted with a t-statistic value of 4.157 and a p-value of 0.000. Similarly, Hypothesis H3, which states that local infrastructure development affects PAEP, was also accepted with a t-statistic of 4.510 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that these two dimensions significantly influence public awareness of economic potential.

However, hypotheses H1 and H7 were rejected because the p-value was greater than 0.05, indicating that the relationship was insignificant. For H1, which tests the effect of transportation accessibility on PAEP, the results show a p-value of 0.169 and a t-statistic of 1.377, so this hypothesis is rejected, meaning that transportation accessibility does not significantly affect community awareness of economic potential. Hypothesis H7, which states that positive perception of tourism involves the active participation of local communities, was also rejected with a p-value of 0.308 and a t-statistic of 1.021, indicating that positive perception of tourism does not directly influence the active participation of local communities in this study.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Discussion

What is the extent of local community involvement in marketing sustainable tourism? The findings of this study indicate that the degree of anticipation of local communities in the marketing of sustainable tourism is influenced by a range of significant factors. The hypothesis that natural resource availability affects public awareness of economic potential was accepted, indicating that available natural resources play a substantial role in increasing local communities' awareness of the financial benefits of tourism. With high t-statistics and

a significant p-value, this result aligns with the understanding that strong natural potential attracts the community's attention, leading to greater involvement in sustainable tourism activities [88]. This is because communities realize that the availability of such resources can be optimized for long-term benefits.

Furthermore, the development of local infrastructure was found to exert a considerable influence on the economic awareness of the community. This hypothesis was accepted with a highly supportive statistical value, indicating that when local infrastructure is enhanced, communities are better positioned to discern the potential economic benefits of tourism. This is because improved access and adequate facilities support the tourism industry [66]. Infrastructure development, encompassing the construction of roads, airports, and tourist facilities, creates a broader range of economic opportunities for locals and increases their involvement in sustainable tourism marketing initiatives.

In contrast, there is no significant influence of transportation accessibility on community awareness of economic potential, as indicated by the rejection of hypothesis H1. This is because, although transportation accessibility is important, this factor is not sufficiently strong to trigger increased economic awareness directly. Local communities tend to prioritize other factors, such as infrastructure development or the availability of natural resources, over transportation accessibility. This suggests that transportation factors are more relevant in the operational context of tourists and tourism managers, while local communities are more influenced by tangible local infrastructure and resources.

The hypothesis was accepted that stakeholder collaboration significantly increases positive perceptions of tourism. This indicates that collaboration between various stakeholders, including the government, local communities, and tourism industry players, contributes considerably to forming positive perceptions of tourism among communities. This suggests that strong collaboration enables communities to feel more involved and in control of tourism management, thus increasing their participation in sustainable tourism marketing.

The availability of education and training also significantly influences the formation of positive perceptions of tourism. With the acceptance of hypothesis H5, this result confirms that

the more education and training available, the more positive the community's perception of the tourism sector. This signifies that communities that gain access to training in tourism and environmental management are more likely to have a more positive view of the benefits of sustainable tourism, increasing their involvement in tourism marketing and management.

Moreover, community awareness of the economic potential was demonstrated to significantly influence active engagement in sustainable tourism marketing, as supported by hypothesis H6. Community awareness of the financial benefits of tourism encourages greater participation in tourism marketing as communities perceive profit potential. This demonstrates that as community awareness of economic potential increases, so does their willingness to engage in sustainable tourism development.

Nevertheless, the positive perceptions of tourism did not significantly influence the community's active involvement in tourism marketing, as evidenced by the rejection of hypothesis H7. Despite communities holding positive perceptions of tourism, these perceptions do not necessarily drive their direct actions or involvement. This suggests that while communities may appreciate the benefits of tourism, other factors, such as awareness of economic potential and infrastructure availability, are more important in motivating them to participate actively.

4.2 Theoretical implications

This study's theoretical implications underscore the diverse factors impacting local community engagement in sustainable tourism marketing. The discovery that natural resource availability and regional infrastructure development notably affect local communities' economic awareness aligns with prior theories highlighting these elements as fundamental assets in sustainable tourism growth. Essentially, rich natural resources and well-developed infrastructure not only draw tourists but also stimulate community participation in the sustainable management and promotion of tourism.

Furthermore, the significant impact of stakeholder collaboration, education, and training availability on enhancing the community's positive perception of tourism highlights the value of collaborative participation theory and community empowerment through education. The literature indicates that collaboration with various stakeholders, including government, businesses, and local communities, can positively impact community perceptions of tourism benefits [89]. This is particularly evident when there is active and synergistic engagement between relevant parties. Education and training reinforce the importance of learning and capacity building as key elements in encouraging broader community participation in sustainable initiatives [23].

Nevertheless, the rejection of the hypothesis connecting transport accessibility and positive tourism perceptions to active local community involvement raises interesting theoretical implications. The results indicate that factors once deemed crucial for boosting community engagement may not universally apply. This challenges the conventional belief that accessibility and positive perceptions inherently lead to active participation. Instead, the findings propose that local circumstances and basic economic considerations play a more vital role in driving community engagement. Thus, this study contributes to existing theory by emphasizing the importance of a contextualized understanding when examining the factors

influencing local community engagement in sustainable tourism marketing.

4.3 Practical implications

The practical implications of these findings provide valuable insights for stakeholders engaged in marketing sustainable tourism in Wakatobi or analogous regions. Firstly, to increase local community involvement, it is recommended that tourism managers and the government focus on developing local infrastructure and optimizing existing natural resources. The results demonstrate that these two factors significantly influence community economic awareness. By improving access to infrastructure such as roads, public facilities, and transportation facilities, communities will be better positioned to perceive the economic potential generated by tourism. This will encourage them to become more involved in sustainable tourism marketing efforts.

Furthermore, it is imperative to emphasize the significance of collaboration between stakeholders. The government, local communities, and tourism industry players must work collectively to devise strategies that foster positive perceptions of tourism among the public [66]. Effective collaboration can enhance active community participation, not only in terms of promotion but also in decision-making processes related to tourism management. By involving the community directly in collaborative programs, a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the preservation and sustainability of the tourism industry in the area can be fostered.

It is similarly imperative to prioritize education and training related to tourism and natural resource management. Increased access to such training will result in more informed and prepared communities engaged in tourism marketing. By providing training on how to utilize tourism potential sustainably, local communities can become agents of change that supports the success of the tourism industry while protecting the local environment and culture [66]. Furthermore, this training can strengthen the community's capacity to manage the negative impacts of tourism, thereby making it more sustainable.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into local community involvement in sustainable tourism marketing in the context of Wakatobi National Park. The results indicate that key factors such as natural resource availability, local infrastructure development, and stakeholder collaboration significantly influence public awareness of economic potential and positive perceptions of tourism among local communities. Furthermore, the results highlight that higher public awareness of economic potential directly leads to greater participation of local communities in tourism marketing. However, the study also found that transportation accessibility and positive perception of tourism did not significantly affect community involvement, suggesting that these factors alone are insufficient to drive active participation.

The importance of these findings lies in their implications for sustainable tourism development strategies. Policymakers and tourism stakeholders should prioritize improving local infrastructure and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders to enhance community participation. In addition, increasing local awareness of the economic potential of

tourism is critical to promoting active participation in sustainable tourism practices. This will support the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry [66], and ensure that local communities benefit directly from tourism activities [88], thereby promoting economic resilience and environmental stewardship.

In terms of limitations, this research focused on a single geographic location, which limits its generalizability to other regions. Future research should aim to explore other destinations with different social, economic, and environmental contexts to validate and extend these findings. In addition, including qualitative approaches in future studies could provide a deeper understanding of the social dynamics and motivations that influence community participation in sustainable tourism marketing. By addressing these limitations, future research can further enrich knowledge on how to effectively engage local communities in sustainable tourism development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank the Directorate of Research, Technology, and Community Service, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Grant No.: 111/E5/PG.02.00.PL/2024) for the financial support of this research. In addition, sincere appreciation is also extended to Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton for providing the necessary resources and institutional support throughout the research process.

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