

THE ROLE OF INDONESIAN YOUTH IN PROMOTING ECOTOURISM POLICY: A POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The ecotourism development strategy is not only the responsibility of the central and regional governments but also all levels of society, including the younger generation. This research aims to examine the role of Indonesian youth in pushing ecotourism policy from a political sociology perspective. Through qualitative descriptive methods with data obtained from literature studies, this research found that youth play a role in destination management, promotion via social media, and support for ecotourism policies. Youth also play a social control role and support participation in policy meetings. Apart from that, it is also known that social and political factors influence the role of youth in ecotourism development, namely social factors and political factors. However, challenges such as lack of promotion and participation of local communities need to be addressed. Therefore, collaborative efforts are required between youth, government, and society to overcome these obstacles and maximize the potential of ecotourism in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with abundant natural and man-made tourism resources. Tourism contributes to foreign exchange which has great potential to boost the Indonesian economy (Pradana & Mahendra, 2021). This can happen because tourism activities can attract foreign tourists to come and visit Indonesia. After experiencing a slump during the Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesian tourism is recovering. In 2023, the Indonesian tourism sector will generate foreign exchange reaching US\$14 billion as can be seen in Figure 1 below.



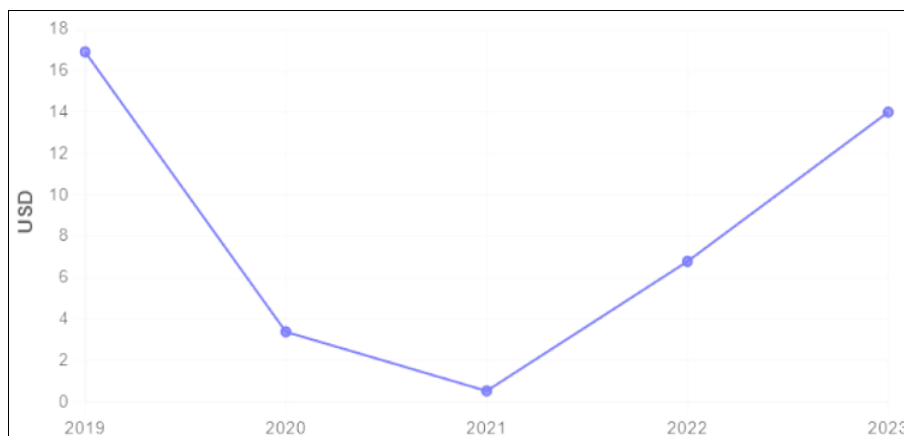


Figure 1. Indonesian Foreign Exchange in the Tourism Sector 2019—2023

Source: bps.go.id, 2024

The development of the tourism sector should not focus on economics alone, but must also focus on environmental and cultural sustainability in an area (Hasyimi & Azizalrahman, 2021). Therefore, natural tourism must apply the principles of ecotourism (Maulana, Nashihah, & Wardah, 2022). The ecotourism-based tourism industry has an important role, such as introducing local culture and traditions in Indonesia, providing insight into the culture in Indonesia, and ecotourism can also function as a tool to build the economy in remote areas, provide employment opportunities, and increase local community income.

The ecotourism-based tourism industry can involve cultural and environmental tourism and local communities working together to promote the area. Rohani and Yitno (2020) explain several important aspects of ecotourism, such as regulating visitor levels to fit within environmental limits and preserve the socio-cultural balance of the region, promoting sustainable tourism practices to assist conservation efforts, and respecting local customs and traditions through tourism methods that show attention to local culture. The ultimate goal of ecotourism is to provide economic benefits to local communities without requiring significant infrastructure investment while encouraging community involvement in the use of local resources.

One of the most famous ecotourism sites in Indonesia is Komodo National Park. This ecotourism includes three islands, namely Komodo Island, Padar Island, and Rinca Island. From this Komodo National Park ecotourism, tourists will see Komodo conservation, Komodo is one of the endemic animals from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia (Hidyarko, et al, 2021). In addition to seeing Komodo conservation, tourists will be able to see the beauty of the underwater with snorkeling and trekking as the komodo itself as can be seen in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Komodo in Komodo National Park Conservation Area

Source: Milko, 2021

A unique experience for tourists is provided by ecotourism-based tourism where visitors can observe daily life and local cultural history (Suryani & Suyatno, 2023). Ecotourism development provides various benefits to various parties, such as local communities, governments, and tourists (Kodi, Tanjung, Sumarmi., Ahmad, Simanjuntak, 2019). For communities, ecotourism can provide local communities with a means to improve their economy and increase their welfare. For the government, ecotourism can be a way to promote tourism and improve the regional economy. As for tourists, ecotourism can provide a better understanding of the culture and nature of Indonesian regions. Developing ecotourism can be a solution to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the environment and culture. Ecotourism management can encourage environmental and cultural protection by involving local communities/youth in its development.

The youth play an important role in the success of ecotourism activities. Yudhiasta (2021) emphasized that the role of youth in ecotourism activities is not only important to protect natural and cultural resources, but also has a positive economic impact on local communities. The spirit and creative thinking of the youth allow them to actively participate in ecotourism activities. They can become reliable tour guides, create creative tourism products, and promote tourism activities through social media. Encouraging ecotourism activities among the youth is another way to raise awareness about the importance of environmental conservation. The community as a whole can learn to protect nature and culture through their actions. The involvement of the youth can contribute to community transformation and encourage sustainable ecotourism efforts. The youth can encourage communities to implement sustainable and eco-friendly tourism practices (Meiji, Kodir, & Hariyono, 2022).

This research aims to examine the role of Indonesian youth in promoting ecotourism policies from a political sociology perspective. This paper examines how youth involvement plays an important role in the development, utilization, and control of ecotourism activities, which also maintains the socio-cultural and religious values of the surrounding community. This research also aims to identify the economic strengths

of local communities in the ecotourism sector and develop local economy-based ecotourism development strategies.

Research on the role of youth in ecotourism provides interest in the world of research, especially in Political Science. Studies on the role of youth in ecotourism have been widely researched before by several researchers. The research included research conducted by Haryati, Armawi, & Supraja, (2016) the study showed that youth play a role in managing ecotourism areas in Kandri Tourism Village only on ecotourism indicators, namely travel to natural areas. The form of this role is in the form of an educational tourism activity program which includes Nyawah Tourism, Outbound Tourism, Kreo Cave Tourism, and River Tubing Tourism. The role of youth in overall community management, especially youth in the ecotourism area, has not run optimally.

Meanwhile, research conducted by Ardiyansari, Saryani, & Muhamad, (2019) in this study shows that the Baros Youth Family Organization (*Keluarga Pemuda Pemudi Baros/KP2B*) has a main role in developing the Baros Mangrove Conservation Area Ecotourism business including the conservation pillar, education pillar, community social pillar, and economic pillar. There are five community empowerment working groups namely Avicenia, Mino Tirtohargo, Andini Lestari-Karya Manunggal, Combined Farmers' Groups and Women's Farmers' Groups (*Gabungan Kelompok Tani-Kelompok Wanita Tani/GAPOKTAN-KWT*), and Processor and Marketer Group (*Kelompok Pengolah dan Pemasar/POKLASAR*). Economic businesses consist of selling seedlings, ecotourism services, selling live-in packages, selling seawood waste crafts, crab cultivation, and coastal park-greening packages. KP2B experiences obstacles in the ecotourism business, namely natural factors and human resources. Ecotourism development efforts have positive implications for environmental resilience including biotic, abiotic, and cultural components.

From the previous studies that have been identified, the researcher sees that these studies only focus on discussing the role of youth in managing ecotourism areas from a specific and limited perspective. Previous researchers highlighted aspects such as educational tourism activity programs, youth organizations, and positive impacts on environmental resilience. However, there is a gap for researchers from these various studies, which has not explained how youth in Indonesia more broadly can collaborate with various stakeholders, including the government, local communities, and the private sector in formulating and encouraging holistic and sustainable ecotourism policies. For this reason, this research focuses on an in-depth analysis of the role of Indonesian youth in encouraging ecotourism policies in Indonesia, with an approach from a political sociology perspective. Social and political factors that influence youth participation in developing ecotourism as well as obstacles that may be faced in youth efforts to optimize the potential of ecotourism in Indonesia. So, this research is a novelty focusing on the relationship between the role of youth in the realm of policy and politics (political sociology).



METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method focusing on a systematic explanation of the facts obtained when the research was conducted. Data collection was carried out using a literature study technique, namely a technique for collecting references related to the topic that the researcher wanted to research (Gentles, Charles, Nicholas, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2016). Researchers will collect data from various literature such as journal articles, books, news, podcasts, legal documents, and so on which are then processed with the researcher's analysis and interpretation.

Data analysis is carried out by organizing data, describing it into units, synthesizing it, arranging it into patterns, choosing what is important to study, and making conclusions. Data validation was carried out using source triangulation techniques. In literature studies, the source triangulation technique is used to ensure data validity and consistency by combining information from multiple sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Researchers can create a more thorough literature review and make sure that the conclusions reached are supported by solid and varied analysis by employing this technique.

In this study, problem identification will be carried out to answer the research questions (RQ). Researchers utilize several concepts related to the phenomena that occur in the field. The following are the concepts that will be used in the research namely the role of youth in ecotourism, youth involvement in ecotourism policy, and social and political factors affecting the role of youth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF TOURISM AND ECOTOURISM IN INDONESIA

Tourism can be understood as a social event that includes individuals, communities, groups, organizations, and cultural aspects (Mustofa, 2022). This shows the complex nature of tourism, which includes various dimensions such as economic, social, and cultural factors, and affects the overall system. Thus, in understanding the essence of tourism, it is crucial to capture its essence from diverse perspectives and scientific viewpoints (Arida, 2017).

Analyzing how political forces and social dynamics shape and are shaped by the tourism industry is central to the political sociology of tourism study. Governments frequently use tourism as a tool to boost national identity and encourage economic development, but it can also spark social unrest and political unrest. Development of the tourism industry, for instance, has the potential to alter land use, uproot local communities, and exacerbate socioeconomic disparities (Pradeep, 2021). Additionally, political conflict can arise from the struggle of national and local governments as well as private actors for control over economic resources and benefits in the tourism industry.

Ecotourism is defined as a journey that is full of responsibility for nature, preserves the environment, and involves interpretation and education (Kia, 2021). The development of ecotourism depends on the consideration of conservation-oriented environmental conditions and respect for local cultures and communities. Ecotourism



does not demand requirements like tourism in general, such as complete recreational facilities. Ecotourism only requires the quality of beautiful nature.

In addition to the natural beauty of the destination, ecotourism also emphasizes immersive, authentic experiences, where travelers can learn and contribute directly to the preservation of the local environment and culture (Mushkudiani, Chkhirodze, & Tevdoradze, 2023). Travelers involved in ecotourism often participate in activities such as tree planting, beach clean-ups, or helping local conservation projects. Sustainable ecotourism development requires collaboration between the government and local communities to create meaningful experiences for travelers while ensuring that the impacts on the local environment and culture remain positive and controlled.

Ecotourism can provide two benefits, namely by promoting conservation efforts and reducing poverty in local communities (Jaya, Izudin, & Aditya, 2022). This can be achieved by hiring local people as tour guides, which in turn can help alleviate economic hardship in the area. Revenue generated from ecotourism can also be used to fund conservation projects that protect the ecotourism areas visited. With this, ecotourism can benefit both the environment and the local community. Furthermore, ecotourism has benefits, its implementation can cause various problems such as changes in animal behavior, increased pressure on local resources, increased pollution, and damage to soil and plants. Ecotourism can have a negative impact if its management does not prioritize environmental issues. This is often due to a lack of understanding and awareness among local communities and tourists about the importance of environmental conservation, as well as ineffective government regulations and poor management practices.

To overcome the challenges of ecotourism, youth should strive to increase understanding and awareness of environmental conservation among local communities and tourists (Kia, 2021). Effective education plays a major role in encouraging behavior change and ensuring that ecotourism has a positive impact on the environment. In addition, strict government regulations and close supervision of ecotourism management practices are also important factors. A balance can be achieved between protecting the environment and developing ecotourism, resulting in sustainable and long-lasting benefits for local communities and nature conservation.

In Indonesia, foreign tourist visits through all entrances in January 2023 amounted to 735,947 consisting of 620,905 foreign tourist visits through the main entrance and other entrances (non-MPD) or 84.37% of the total visits, and 115,042 foreign tourist visits through the entrance. Other borders (MPD) or 15.63% of total visits. This number experienced a growth of 503.34% compared to January 2022, which amounted to 121,978 visits. The highest number of foreign tourist visits from 5 nationalities in January 2023 came from Malaysia with 112,287 visits, Australia with 99,089 visits, Singapore with 96,032 visits, Timor Leste with 70,403 visits, and India with 32,839 visits (Kemenparekraf.go.id, 2023). This percentage can be seen in Figure 3 below.



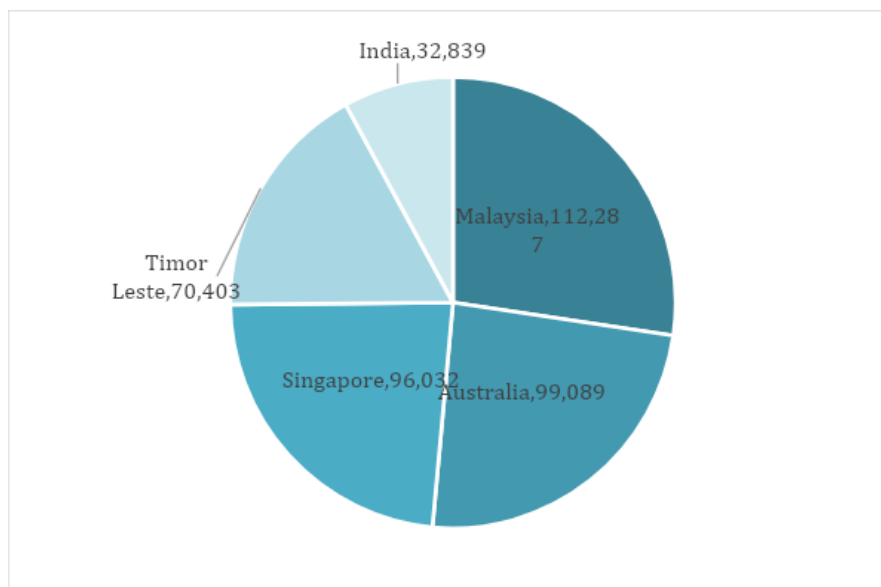


Figure 3. Percentage of Tourists from the 5 Most Countries to Indonesia in January 2023

Youth play a significant role in promoting tourism through social media and various digital platforms, which has led to an increase in the percentage of tourists visiting Indonesia following the Covid-19 pandemic (Elviria, Zaki, & Suhendri, 2024). Tourists from both domestic and foreign countries are drawn to the captivating content produced by Indonesian youth, who use technology and their creative juices to showcase the country's natural beauty, culture, and cuisine. In addition, they manage microbusinesses and startups in the tourism industry, support community initiatives that highlight tourism destinations, and work toward the development of sustainable tourism. After the pandemic's severe effects, the involvement of these young people has helped rebuild and even enhance Indonesia's tourism sector.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ENCOURAGING ECOTOURISM GROWTH

The young generation is the hope of nation-building. The good and bad of development, civilization, and culture of a society depends on its young generation. The existence of youth who are active in community activities is a solution to community empowerment efforts so that youth play an important role in community development. The role of youth in community life can be realized in various aspects, such as social aspects, environmental aspects, and political aspects.

The youth have the potential to contribute as educators in social-ecotourism education in society (Cini & Passafaro, 2019). In the environmental context, youth play a role in protecting the environment, by joining environmental organizations. In the organization, youth are expected to contribute as agents of change and conceptualizers and can be involved in field actions. In politics, youth can play an important role in improving political resilience by becoming agents of political education and elections. In West Kalimantan, for example, the big role of youth in the development of ecotourism and their involvement in political policy can be seen in the Telok Stand Sungai Kupah

Ecotourism (Kubu Raya Regency) which is also a mangrove ecotourism area with digital mangrove planting innovations. The innovation brought by a young man from the area, Rudi Hartono, has repeatedly won various awards at the national level. The existing tour packages are also attractive to tourists as can be seen in Figure 4 below.



Figure 4. Digital Mangrove Planting at the Telok Standing Kupah River Ecotourism by Researchers with Youth Management of the Ecotourism Area

Source: Researcher's documentation, 2019

Based on these aspects, youth have an important role as a driver of sustainability and a positive impact on the environment and local communities. Their activeness in various aspects of social, environmental, and political life proves that young people have great potential to become agents of change in moving the ecotourism sector for the better. There are at least three best practices that involve youth in solving environmental problems, namely the youth voice movement, youth service, and youth governance. First, youth voice is a strong step in developing youth involvement, because youth voice can have a significant impact on change, for example increasing ecotourism to protect the environment and local culture. Second, youth services emphasize concrete action on environmental issues. The actions taken vary depending on the environmental problems that occur, for example, youth can create environmental care organizations to protect the environment and culture to create safe and environmentally friendly ecotourism. Third, youth governance directs youth to have a leadership spirit, for example, youth play an active role in an environmental organization and can create breakthroughs that can protect the environment, such as creating ecotourism tourism (Itsbya, 2021).

For this reason, the role of youth in ecotourism has a great impact. In addition, youth services can also expand the network and community involvement in environmental conservation efforts. Through activities such as awareness campaigns or environmental clean-ups, youth can be directly involved in nature and biodiversity conservation efforts. Youth services also create opportunities for youth to teach and educate.

In addition, youth governance plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of ecotourism initiatives. By facilitating and providing a venue for collaboration with other stakeholders, youth governance creates an enabling environment for growth and innovation. Youth involved in environmental organizations can collaborate with stakeholders who are expected to influence policies and strategies related to environmental conservation and ecotourism development. For example, in Batudulang Village, located in Batu Lanteh Sub-district, in Sumbawa Regency, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), children participating in the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) have effectively demonstrated their ability to observe ecotourism activities. The village manages an eco-tourism area with the beautiful Tiu Dua waterfall as its main attraction. A dedicated team at Pokdarwis Batudulang has overseen this waterfall tourism destination for two years, with current efforts focused on organizing a Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) to improve management and utilization. In addition, Batudulang Village also has a selfie tower, which is a tourist spot that provides panoramic views from a height suitable for taking selfies. The revenue generated by the place is not too large, approximately Rp5 million per year. The number of visitors increases based on the season, especially during vacations and holidays. At peak times, these two tourist attractions can attract up to 500 visitors per day (Riyadi, 2018).

The Tourism Awareness Group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata/Pokdarwis*) in Batudulang Village exemplifies the potential of local communities to develop the ecotourism sector. Their success in managing and conserving Tiu Dua waterfall over the past two years demonstrates the positive impact of the youth in sustainably utilizing natural resources. Their efforts to establish a Village-Owned Enterprise (*Badan Usaha Milik Desa/BUMDes*) demonstrate a commitment to improved management and long-term economic benefits. Along with the waterfalls, the addition of a selfie tower in Batudulang Village adds to the diversity of tourist destinations, but the revenue generated may not yet reach its full potential. So, by working with the youth and village government, ecotourism development in Batudulang Village is not only a way to make money but also a way to protect the environment and sustain the local economy. This also shows the important role of youth in ecotourism development, including in the policy realm.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Based on the results of this research, researchers found several socio-political factors that influence the role of youth in ecotourism development based on a political sociology perspective can be seen in Figure 5 below.



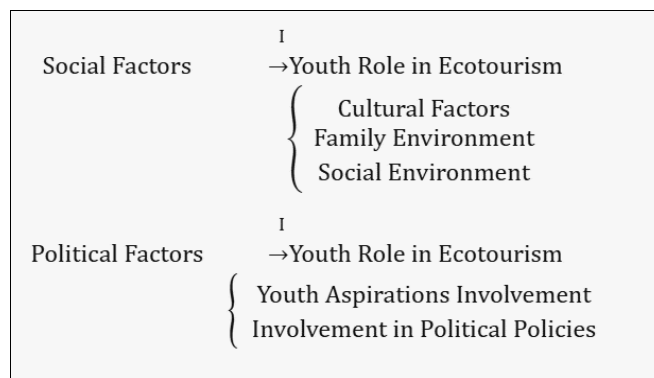


Figure 5. Youth in Ecotourism Development Based on A Political Sociology Perspective

1. Social Factors

These social factors consist of cultural factors, family environment, and social environment. Cultural factors play an important role in how people respond to something that is considered to have values and customs. These factors can stem from various aspects such as the way information is received, an individual's social standing in society, and their understanding and beliefs. Culture serves as a powerful influence in regulating human behavior (Supriyono & Iskandar, 2015). Cultural influences affect youth participation in ecotourism. Environmental protection in ecotourism is strongly influenced by the culture that shapes the attitudes and behavior of the youth. Therefore, a thorough understanding of cultural factors is essential to explain the role and contribution of the youth to the development of ecotourism in Indonesia.

Then on family environmental factors, the influence of the family on children's behavioral development and adaptation is significant, as the family serves as the main basis for children's interaction with the external environment, including the home environment and educational environment. Family involvement in ecotourism is particularly important for the youth. Family influence plays an important role in shaping and changing children's behavior while providing them with the necessary support to interact with nature at home and school. By promoting values, attitudes, and awareness of sustainability in the home environment, Indonesia's youth can play an important role in promoting ecotourism (Aswita, 2018).

The social environment is the context in which daily activities are conducted. The social environment of any place exerts a significant influence on a person's behavior and discipline, as these are shaped by the environment in which they live. Social environments are interrelated, and thus play a role in interaction activities (Pakaya & Posumah, 2021). The social environment exerts a direct or indirect influence on the way a person thinks. This influence is often not fully realized by everyone. This is the case with individuals who are less aware of the influence of the social environment on their daily lives, including in terms of education.

Youth engagement in ecotourism is strongly influenced by the social environment. The diversity of social environments in various places affects the development of young people's behavior and discipline. Because their behavior reflects the norms and values

that exist in the environment where they live. Growing up in an environment that promotes environmental awareness and sustainability reflects family values. It is this youth that plays a more active role in developing and supporting ecotourism policies in Indonesia.

2. Political Factors

Youth participation in ecotourism development is directed and facilitated by political actors in large measure. Youth aspirations can communicate their needs, ideas, and innovations related to ecotourism when they are involved in the political process (Mulyani, Ahsani, & Wijaya, 2021). Policies that result are typically more inclusive and sensitive to the needs of the younger generation when youth voices are heard and taken into account during political decision-making. Aspirations of young people expressed through different political channels can motivate the government to focus on and grow the ecotourism industry as a means of promoting sustainable development. Youth can participate in this, and it also helps them become more capable of changing society as change agents.

Youth's role in the development of ecotourism is further reinforced by their involvement in political policy-making. Youth can make sure that the policies enacted support ecotourism initiatives that are sustainable and friendly to the environment by actively participating in the legislative process. Engaging in politics gives young people the chance to learn more about public policy and government processes, which will help them manage and promote ecotourism projects more effectively. Encouraging youth to become responsible and visionary leaders in the future is another benefit of this involvement, in addition to the ecotourism industry.

The government takes the role of formulating policies that have the potential to foster ecotourism, such as Local Government Policies. These specific policies are formulated and implemented by local governing bodies, such as provinces, districts, or villages. Their creation is driven by the aim of meeting the needs of residents and improving their welfare. The policies cover various measures, such as environmental conservation, waste management, water and land administration, and natural disaster management. Policy measures taken by local governments may also address region-specific issues, such as promoting the potential of tourism, agriculture, or fisheries sectors, and supporting cultural and artistic initiatives. It is crucial to consider the unique characteristics of the region when implementing such policies (Mukhlis, 2023).

In the context of ecotourism, local government policies can provide substantial support for the development of the sector. One potential step that local governments can take is to identify and protect existing ecotourism potential in their area. This could include the establishment of nature parks, hiking trails, or the management of natural ecosystems that appeal to environmentally conscious travelers.

Local governments can promote responsible ecotourism through initiatives such as environmentally friendly infrastructure development, sustainable waste management, and community involvement in the management and development of ecotourism destinations. These policies can promote economic growth and environmental sustainability in local communities.



Youth involvement in the formulation and implementation of ecotourism policies can be done by, in particular, those who are actively involved in the community, participating in youth organizations, and offering suggestions during meetings, which are the most important (Novrizaldi, 2021). Involving young people in this process not only supports their representation but also ensures that their perspectives are recognized and considered. By harnessing the energy, creativity, and innovative spirit of young people, ecotourism policies can become more relevant.

BARRIERS TO OPTIMIZING INDONESIA'S ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL

Given the importance of effective resource management, it is imperative to address the various barriers that hinder the realization of this potential. To foster an environment conducive to tourism development, it is imperative for the community and the government to establish a mutually beneficial relationship. By doing so, we can effectively create a sustainable framework for tourism growth. Based on research results from various literature, several barriers to optimizing Indonesia's ecotourism potential are known, which can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Barriers to Optimizing Indonesia's Ecotourism Potential

Barrier	Description
Infrastructure Deficiencies	Poor transportation and lodging options, as well as a lack of basic amenities like clean water and sanitary facilities, are among the many infrastructure problems plaguing Indonesian ecotourism destinations.
Marketing and Promotion Challenges	To promote ecotourism destinations, there is a deficiency in stakeholder collaboration, digital platform usage, and strategic marketing campaigns.
Lack of Skilled Human Resources	Experts in conservation, hospitality, and guiding are among the skilled workers in the ecotourism industry who are in short supply.
Tour Packages That Have Not Adjusted to the Target Market	The specialized packages offered by ecotourism, which cater to particular markets or interest groups, may result in a reduced level of interest in the broader tourism sector.
Budgetary Restraints	The sector's expansion is hampered by a lack of financing and investment in ecotourism infrastructure, education, and conservation initiatives.
Politics, Regulation, and Policy Concerns	The development and management of ecotourism projects can be hindered by bureaucratic obstacles, unclear and inconsistent policies, and the non-enforcement of environmental regulations.

The table shows several obstacles to barriers to optimizing Indonesia's ecotourism potential. Obstacles to developing ecotourism potential include accessibility issues such as poorly maintained roads and ecotourism, lack of essential facilities such as clean



toilets, proper garbage disposal, information kiosks on ecotourism, and wayfinding, are major concerns for tourists engaged in tourism activities. The provision of these public facilities is crucial in promoting ecotourism (Swabawa & Arida, 2022). It can be reasonably assumed that tourists who have a better understanding of the importance of preserving nature are likely to behave more responsibly during their visit. Consequently, education programs targeting tourists and local communities need to be improved. This can be achieved through the implementation of interactive information boards, eco-tour guides, and workshops involving residents. In this way, ecotourism not only provides a valuable tourism experience but also contributes to environmental conservation and the well-being of local communities.

Lack of promotion and lack of detailed information on natural, cultural, and other attractions that can attract tourists (Feriyansyah, Syafei, & Narimawati, 2024). Lack of website development and social media presence on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, can increase accessibility to visually appealing information for potential tourists. To overcome this problem, a more comprehensive and integrated marketing strategy is required. The utilization of digital technology and social media can be optimized to disseminate pertinent information about ecotourism destinations. The development of user-friendly websites, complete with online booking features and virtual tours, as well as appealing visual content on social media platforms, can enhance the appeal and interest of potential tourists. Furthermore, collaboration with influencers and bloggers specializing in travel and ecotourism can also facilitate the expansion of promotional reach. Consequently, information about natural and cultural attractions can be more readily accessed by tourists, which in turn can increase the number of visits and regional income.

Besides that, limited resources and a lack of community involvement in ecotourism management can cause problems. Ecotourism should seek community involvement, promote welfare, and provide positive outcomes (Setia, 2022). To overcome resource limitations and increase community involvement, it is of the utmost importance to involve residents in every stage of ecotourism development. This can be achieved through the implementation of training and empowerment programs that focus on the skills needed in the tourism industry, such as tour guiding, homestay management, and local handicrafts. Furthermore, the establishment of partnerships between the government, private sector, and local communities can facilitate more effective and sustainable resource allocation. Consequently, communities not only benefit from ecotourism but also play an active role in maintaining and promoting it. This ultimately improves their welfare and ensures positive outcomes for the environment and local economy.

Most travelers in Indonesia show little interest in ecotourism. Ecotourism, with its packages tailored to niche markets or special interest groups, attracts a more specific target audience, which in turn contributes to the lack of interest in the broader tourism market (Setia, 2022). To enhance the appeal of ecotourism to a broader audience, it is essential to diversify and innovate in the tour packages offered. The integration of ecotourism experiences with other popular attractions, such as local culture, cuisine,



and adventure, can enhance the appeal of ecotourism to a wider market. Furthermore, the promotion of unique benefits and memorable experiences associated with ecotourism can facilitate a shift in travelers' perceptions. Furthermore, marketing campaigns that emphasize inspiring stories of sustainability and positive contributions to the environment may also attract travelers with high environmental awareness.

In addition, ecotourism often incurs high costs for conservation and local welfare, making ecotourism proponents highly dependent on tourist revenues. However, the sustainability of ecotourism in Indonesia may be weakened by a lack of ecotourists. Ecotourists play a critical role in maintaining economic revenue for conservation and communities. The smaller the ecotourism market, the smaller the number of tourists, which emphasizes the importance of domestic tourist participation in ecotourism (Setia, 2022). To ensure the long-term viability of ecotourism in Indonesia, it is essential to enhance the participation of travelers. This can be initiated by increasing awareness and education about ecotourism among Indonesians. National campaign programs that emphasize the advantages of ecotourism for conservation and the well-being of local communities can attract a greater number of domestic tourists.

In the social structure of society, the youth has significant potential to advance ecotourism. This potential arises from the important role played by the youth, not only as heirs to the ideals of the nation but also as the main driving force behind the dynamics of national development (Putri, 2022). The role played by youth in nation-building is to contribute to the development of ecotourism tourism. In the tourism industry, youth are expected to participate creatively and be able to innovate for the advancement of ecotourism. Youth are expected to be able to promote ecotourism with their skills in using social media, promotions are carried out by uploading natural and socio-cultural beauty and are expected to increase awareness of the preservation of nature and culture.

Youth involvement in ecotourism policy can be seen for example, in Gunung Halimun Salak National Park in Sukabumi, the youth carry out their responsibility to preserve nature with the principle of "if not us who else and if not now then when else" (Nisa, 2021). Ecotourism in Gunung Halimun Salak National Park has benefited the local community and has made a significant contribution to the regional economy. This ecotourism development has succeeded in creating employment opportunities for the surrounding community.

In the development of ecotourism tourism, this is our shared responsibility not only to the central and regional governments but also to all levels of society (Baloch, Shah, Iqbal, Sheeraz, Asadullah, Mahar, & Khan, 2023). This includes the youth, who not only manage but also care for and preserve nature and culture which is an important part of the role of youth in showing love for the country. Young people can form organizations that focus on the tourism sector. This organization functions as a forum to unite young people in tourism development efforts. This organization can function as a forum for exchanging ideas, planning activities, and fostering cooperation with the government and related stakeholders. Through this collaboration, the aim is to facilitate youth participation in meetings and formulate policies related to tourism. By working



together in organizations, youth can collectively contribute to the promotion of ecotourism in rural areas.

One of the organizations involved in promoting tourism is the Abdi Muda Nusantara (Amtara) organization, a non-governmental organization that encourages youth participation to develop Indonesia through community service activities, with an emphasis on developing the potential of young people. Amtara offers youth the opportunity to not only learn but also innovate and contribute to society in various fields, such as education, health, social, and environmental, as well as economy and tourism.

Thus, inconsistent and unclear policies, lack of enforcement of environmental regulations, and bureaucratic hurdles can impede the development and management of ecotourism projects (Kumar, Edwar, & George, 2022). This includes difficulties in obtaining permits and navigating complex legal frameworks. This circumstance highlights the need for changes to bureaucratic rules and regulations to improve the conditions that will support the growth of sustainable ecotourism.

In social and political factors, youth play a very important role in increasing ecotourism. First, youth play a role in social control. This function is very important because it allows the youth to enhance nationalism values, improve their understanding of rights and obligations as citizens, foster a critical mindset towards environmental issues and law enforcement, participate in the public policy-making process, ensure government transparency and responsibility, and/or simplify access to information (Fither, 2020). Secondly, the involvement of central and local government support is crucial. Ecotourism provides an environmental management tool for local governments, while simultaneously offering an alternative source of income for locals. Furthermore, it helps to avoid unsustainable land use (Rijal et al, 2020).

Political factors also influence the level of youth involvement in tourism-related decision-making processes. The government can provide spaces and mechanisms for youth participation in tourism forums to guarantee that their aspirations or suggestions are heard and their wishes are taken into account in tourism-related policies and programs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results that have been described, Indonesian youth can contribute to ecotourism policy. Based on the research findings, the youth plays an important role in various aspects of community life, especially in the development of ecotourism. At the community level, youth have the potential to become agents of change through community activities and education for the underprivileged. From an environmental perspective, youth can play an important role in saving the environment by joining ecological organizations.

The sustainability of ecotourism initiatives also depends on youth governance. The creation of an environment conducive to growth and innovation is achieved through youth governance, in collaboration with other stakeholders. Environmental youth



organizations can act as agents of change by developing policies and strategies related to environmental conservation and ecotourism.

Ecotourism development is influenced by various social factors, including cultural sustainability, family interactions, and social dynamics in the community. Culture plays an important role in shaping individual values and traditions. Family and social environments provide an important foundation for young people's interactions with the world around them. Government policies, especially at the local level, significantly influence the promotion of ecotourism. These policies cover environmental conservation, waste management, water and land governance, and natural disaster management efforts. Nonetheless, several barriers such as accessibility issues, lack of promotional efforts, limited human resources, and low participation of local communities indicate that there are still challenges that need to be overcome to optimize ecotourism potential.

Ecotourism in Indonesia faces major challenges related to the high costs of conservation and the well-being of local communities. Ecotourism proponents often rely heavily on tourist revenues, which can cause economic instability for conservation and local communities. Lack of participation from ecotourism actors potentially jeopardizes the sustainability of ecotourism in Indonesia. The critical role played by ecotourists in increasing economic revenue for conservation and local communities is increasingly important. In cases where the ecotourism market is limited, the number of travelers plays a critical role in sustaining ecotourism practices. To increase the success of ecotourism, youth, government, and communities must work together to remove barriers. These collective efforts may include improving facilities, more efficient promotion, encouraging more community involvement, and raising awareness about ecotourism among visitors.

Thus, in general, the findings of this research conclude that this research found that youth play a role in destination management, promotion via social media, and support for ecotourism policies. Youth also play a social control role and support participation in policy meetings. Apart from that, it is also known that social and political factors influence the role of youth in ecotourism development, namely social factors and political factors. However, challenges such as lack of promotion and participation of local communities need to be addressed. Therefore, collaborative efforts are needed between youth, government, and society to overcome these obstacles and maximize the potential of ecotourism in Indonesia. The weakness of this research is that the method used is still limited in the literature. It is hoped that future research can be carried out using other methods, especially observation and so on.



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