

The Dynamics of Natural Tourism Management of Goa Lawah in Lebah Sempage Village Narmada Subdistrict West Lombok Regency

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to explore the dynamics of natural tourism management at Goa Lawah, located in Lebah Sempage Village, Narmada District, West Lombok Regency. Using a qualitative approach with a symbolic interactionism method, the study analyzes the interactions, perceptions, and meanings constructed by local communities, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), and village authorities in managing the tourism site. The findings reveal that community participation remains partial and focuses primarily on technical activities such as community service (gotong royong), while involvement in strategic processes such as planning, decision-making, and evaluation is very limited. This indicates that the implementation of Community Based Tourism (CBT) has not been fully realized, as empowerment, collective ownership, and equitable benefit distribution are still lacking. From the perspective of Elinor Ostrom's Common Pool Resources theory, local institutions at Goa Lawah experience institutional voids in ensuring inclusive collective participation. Such partial participation may lead to long-term negative impacts, including community apathy, potential social conflicts, and unequal economic benefit distribution. Therefore, strengthening local institutions through reconstructing power relations and developing participatory institutions is essential for establishing sustainable community-based tourism management.

KEYWORDS: Dynamics, Management, Participation, Institution, CBT.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country comprising approximately 17,504 islands, with a land area of about 1,922,570 km² and a water area of 6,400,000 km². This geographical condition reflects its rich biodiversity, natural beauty, unique ecosystems, and significant opportunities for ecotourism development. Ecosystems such as tropical forests and aquatic ecosystems, particularly marine environments, serve as distinct attractions for nature-based tourism, making them key potentials. Indonesia's natural wealth represents tourism resources scattered throughout the archipelago. In terms of nature-based tourism, Indonesia possesses extraordinary natural resources. A large portion of its land consists of tropical forests that contain unique ecosystems. Each ecosystem harbors abundant natural resources (Azhari, 2017).

Lombok Island, as one of Indonesia's leading tourist destinations, offers various attractive natural tourism potentials, one of which is Goa Lawah located in Lebah Sempage Village, Narmada Sub-district, West Lombok Regency. Goa Lawah stands out as a significant natural tourism attraction in Lebah Sempage Village, Narmada Sub-district, West Lombok Regency. According to Utama and Junaedi (2015), tourist attractions are divided into two categories: natural attractions and man-made attractions. Goa Lawah is classified as a natural tourism attraction because its primary appeal derives from its natural beauty and elements that were formed without human intervention.

The West Lombok Regency Government has formulated tourism development policies through the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2019–2024 and Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2020 concerning Tourism Villages. These policies emphasize the importance of developing tourism based on local potential, community participation, and sustainability principles. However, the implementation of these policies at the village level, including in Lebah Sempage Village, remains suboptimal and faces various challenges in its execution. In its management, the Goa Lawah Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) encounters several challenges. One major challenge is limited funding, which affects various development programs. Sudibya (2023) states that these financial constraints hinder the sustainability of development programs that should enhance the attractiveness of Goa Lawah as a tourist destination. Another challenge is related to land ownership, as not all of the land belongs to Goa Lawah, resulting in revenue-sharing arrangements with landowners.

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The management of Goa Lawah's natural tourism holds great potential for development through collaboration with various parties such as the government, private sector, and local community groups. Tourism has become a strategic sector in both national and regional economies. Based on data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of West Lombok Regency in 2023, the tourism sector contributed approximately 5.4% to the region's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP). This figure indicates that tourism is one of the strategic sectors driving local economic growth. This contribution comes from various sources, including entrance fees from tourist sites, tourist expenditures, as well as indirect economic effects felt by MSMEs, accommodation businesses, and transportation services in the surrounding areas.

By utilizing this potential, Goa Lawah can be developed into an excellent and sustainable nature-based tourism destination. Based on these various dynamics, it is deemed necessary to conduct an in-depth study on the management of Goa Lawah's natural tourism. The aim of this research is to examine the dynamics of Goa Lawah's natural tourism management and to identify appropriate development strategies to optimize its sustainable management.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Based Tourism (CBT) Management

The theory of Community Based Tourism (CBT) is a crucial concept in the development of the tourism sector, focusing on local community participation and empowerment. This concept is based on the belief that tourism should provide direct benefits to local communities and support their social, cultural, and environmental aspirations (Murphy, 2013).

Sustainable Tourism Development

The "Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC)" theory explains that sustainable tourism management requires a comprehensive approach, including the planning and maintenance of facilities to support the appeal of tourist destinations. The availability of adequate infrastructure is one of the key factors in maintaining the attractiveness of a destination. Butler proposed that tourist destinations develop in predictable stages, similar to the product life cycle theory in marketing (Butler, 1980).

Institutional Economics Theory

Institutional economics studies how social structures, rules, norms, and governance mechanisms influence economic behavior. Institutions are seen as the "rules of the game" in socio-economic interactions, creating incentives and shaping the strategic choices of actors within the economic system. The main focus of this theory is to analyze how formal institutions (laws, regulations) and informal institutions (customs, traditions) shape economic performance. Institutions are viewed as mechanisms that reduce uncertainty and economic transaction costs, defining the incentive structure in society. The critical perspective of institutional economics lies in revealing the dynamics of power, interests, and adaptation mechanisms within the economic system. Institutions are not only rules but also arenas of interest contestation that shape the distribution of resources and economic access.

Common Pool Resources (CPR) Governance Theory

Elinor Ostrom's concept of Common Pool Resources (CPR) governance makes a significant contribution in explaining how local communities can independently and sustainably manage their natural resources without relying on government intervention or market mechanisms. This approach is highly relevant when applied to the management of community based tourist destinations, such as the Goa Lawah area in Lebah Sempage Village, where the involvement of local communities becomes key to the success of conservation and destination development.

In her book *Governing the Commons* (1990), Ostrom critiques Garrett Hardin's pessimistic view that common resources will inevitably degrade (known as "the tragedy of the commons") if not overseen by external authorities. Contrary to this view, Ostrom demonstrates through various case studies that local communities are capable of establishing efficient management systems by building internal rules and social institutions that ensure the sustainability of resources.

III. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using the symbolic interaction method to explore the dynamics of nature-based management in Goa Lawah. According to Blumer (1986), symbolic interactionism is based on three premises: first, individuals act toward things based on the meanings they assign to those objects; second, these meanings arise from social interaction with others; and third, these meanings are reinforced through interpretive processes during interactions.

In this study, the symbolic interaction approach is used to analyze how members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) as managers, the village secretary, and the community members of Lebah Sempage Village understand and interact in the

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management of tourism at Goa Lawah. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) emphasize that this approach enables researchers to understand how individuals interpret situations and construct their actions based on those interpretations.

The research model is theoretically viewed as a model of interpersonal cultural interaction, which then evolves into relationships between social systems and/or groups. This makes the approach widely adopted in social research. Based on this perspective, the researcher explores and examines interpersonal cultural interactions within the dynamics of nature-based tourism management in Goa Lawah.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the research findings, several dynamics were identified in the management of nature based tourism at Goa Lawah, namely:

a. Dynamics of Goa Lawah Planning Amid Land Ownership Limitations

The management of the Goa Lawah tourist destination demonstrates complex dynamics, ranging from planning, implementation, to monitoring and evaluation processes. One of the main obstacles affecting the entire process is the uncertainty of land ownership status. These dynamics are analyzed through the symbolic interactionist approach, which focuses on how social meanings are formed through interaction and symbols within the community environment.

1. In the planning phase, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) faces difficulties in designing development plans because parts of the land within the tourist area are still privately owned by local individuals. This condition prevents comprehensive and systematic planning. From the symbolic interactionist perspective, "land" is not merely seen as a physical space, but also as a symbol of power and social authority. Therefore, before constructing tourist facilities, the managers need to adapt to local social values and obtain consent from the landowners.

This is reflected in Mr. S's statement: "It actually depends on the income, but we give 30% of the net income to the landowners." Sharing profits with landowners is a way for the managers to show respect for the owners' authority over the land that they do not officially own. Consequently, development plans must be adjusted and only cover areas deemed safe and free from potential social conflicts.

2. In the implementation stage, various challenges arise because limited land directly affects the facilities available to visitors. For instance, the small parking area and narrow entrance are often complained about as they make visitors uncomfortable. From a symbolic perspective, aspects such as area size and facility completeness are understood by visitors as symbols of comfort and service quality. For the management, these limitations are not due to poor management capability but rather to the physical constraints of the available land. They do not have full control over the entire area, thus they cannot build freely. The decision not to carry out large-scale development also reflects their awareness of potential conflicts with landowners or the surrounding community. Therefore, tourism development programs are carried out gradually and cautiously to maintain social relationships and prevent future issues.

3. In the monitoring and evaluation stage, land status continues to have a significant impact, even though landowners actually support tourism activities. Problems arise because the working boundaries of Pokdarwis have not been officially established in administrative documents, making it difficult to determine the full scope of evaluation. The support of landowners remains crucial, but without clearly defined management boundaries, the monitoring process is less effective. The village government states that the active involvement of landowners is still needed, especially to ensure that tourism programs can continue smoothly and sustainably. Their involvement also helps maintain coordination between parties and prevent potential conflicts during program implementation and evaluation.

Mr. H stated: "Since many people directly border the landowners, they are very supportive."

This statement shows that evaluation is not only carried out technically but also involves social aspects. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the assessment of an action is not solely based on figures or physical achievements but also on how the actions are interpreted and understood by those involved. If landowners feel involved and respected in the management process, they will perceive the program as successful and worthy of support. However, if they feel excluded, the support previously given may be withdrawn at any time, which could threaten the sustainability of the tourism program in the future.

b. Maintaining the Potential of Goa Lawah Amid Limited Resources and Facilities

One of the main challenges in managing Goa Lawah tourism is the limited capacity of human resources, particularly in administration and communication. Examples of this include irregular visitor record-keeping, limited foreign language skills, and underdeveloped supporting facilities such as parking areas and access roads. All of these indicate that the existing management system remains weak.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, these weaknesses are not merely technical issues but also reflect the absence of symbols that represent a strong organization. For instance, the lack of visitor records or administrative documents can be seen as

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a sign of unprofessionalism and lack of accountability. When Pokdarwis members have not yet understood the importance of proper governance, they have not successfully built a collective image as reliable tourism managers.

This is reinforced by a statement from Mr. S during the interview, emphasizing the importance of “good administration” as an institutional foundation. Conversely, the absence of elements such as visitor forms, information boards, and financial reports leads both the community and tourists to perceive that the area is not professionally managed and is not institutionally prepared.

c. Partial Community Participation in the Management of Goa Lawah

The interview results reveal that community involvement in the management of Goa Lawah tourism remains limited and has not extended to strategic aspects. Most residents only participate in communal work (*gotong royong*), such as cleaning the tourist area every Friday, usually initiated by the village government. Meanwhile, only around 12 members of Pokdarwis are actively involved in directly managing tourism activities.

According to symbolic interactionist theory, participation is not merely about being present or involved in activities, but also involves the creation of meaning and symbols of togetherness. The weekly Friday communal work can be seen as a symbol of social solidarity and community support for the tourism sector. However, this activity is not sufficient to foster a strong sense of ownership over the destination. If the residents are not involved in planning or decision-making processes, the participation that occurs is merely symbolic or formal, not real and meaningful participation.

This shows that the interaction between the community and Pokdarwis has not fully built a shared structure of meaning that could strengthen collective awareness regarding the importance of participatory tourism management. In this context, the meaning of “being part of the management” has not yet evenly developed among the community, resulting in involvement that is more incidental rather than driven by shared understanding and commitment. Therefore, efforts are needed to strengthen deeper symbolic relationships between the community and tourism managers, through active engagement in planning, the formulation of local regulations, and open and inclusive evaluation forums.

The phenomenon of “partial” participation in the management of Goa Lawah tourism illustrates community involvement that is limited to physical and symbolic aspects, such as communal work, without participation in strategic processes like planning, decision-making, or evaluation. This situation raises an important question: does this reflect a failure in the application of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), or does it indicate weaknesses in institutional roles?

According to the CBT perspective, community participation should ideally be comprehensive and meaningful, encompassing empowerment, shared ownership, and fair benefit distribution (Murphy, 2013). If the community is only involved in surface-level activities without having a role in determining the direction and vision of management, then the implementation of CBT has not been effectively realized. In other words, the current participation represents mere involvement without true empowerment. This indicates that conceptually, the implementation of CBT in Goa Lawah has not succeeded because it fails to address the structural and cultural aspects of community empowerment.

From Elinor Ostrom’s (1990) perspective, this condition also reflects shortcomings in local institutional roles. In the management of common-pool resources such as community-based tourism, institutional systems are needed to guarantee the community's rights to set rules, access information, monitor resource utilization, and contribute to sustainability. If decision-making is dominated by a small group, such as Pokdarwis administrators or the village government, then Ostrom's basic principles—such as collective rule-making and recognition of the right to self-organize—are not fulfilled. As a result, the community is not only disempowered but also not recognized as important actors within the local institutional structure.

Consequently, this partial participation may lead to long-term consequences, such as citizen apathy, resistance to tourism policies, and social conflict if the economic benefits are not evenly distributed. Moreover, the absence of a strong institutional system makes management vulnerable to disintegration and dependence on external assistance without a solid internal foundation.

Therefore, this partial participation reflects two major issues at once: the failure to realize the principles of CBT and deficiencies in the local institutions that should serve as the primary foundation for community-based management. Addressing these problems requires more than simply increasing activities; it calls for a reconstruction of power relations and the design of inclusive and democratic institutions.

For comparison, a study by Sawu and Sugiarti (2024) on Waturaka Village shows that the community there plays an active role in the planning and management of tourism. This involvement reflects the existence of citizen power—the community's ability to help determine management direction. In comparison, community participation in Goa Lawah still needs to be strengthened to truly reflect deep and meaningful involvement.



Picture 4.2 Community Participation in the Management of Goa Lawah

d. Sustainable Tourism in Goa Lawah and Commitment to Environmental Conservation

The efforts toward sustainable tourism in Goa Lawah have begun to show positive results. This can be seen from environmental conservation activities such as tree planting, organic waste management, and the development of hiking trails leading to Mount Rinjani. Based on interviews with the management, these activities have become an important part of the community's identity and demonstrate their commitment to protecting the environment. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, these activities carry symbolic meaning as forms of moral responsibility and concern for the environment. For example, the trees planted do not merely serve to prevent erosion or landslides but also stand as tangible symbols of the community's conservation values.

The practice of recycling organic waste and producing compost, which they learned through training provided by the Tourism Department, demonstrates how waste can be transformed into something useful, both materially and symbolically. The symbolic meaning is also evident in the community's efforts to make the Goa Lawah hiking trail an official part of the Mount Rinjani trekking route. This initiative reflects the community's aspiration to elevate the image and status of their destination, transforming it from being known only locally to gaining recognition at the national level. In this process, the role of social media and support from related stakeholders have helped strengthen this symbolic meaning in the public eye.

e. Reflection and Theoretical Implications

Using a symbolic interactionist approach, it can be understood that the management of Goa Lawah tourism is not merely about technical aspects, but also reflects a dynamic process of meaning-making among the actors involved. Various activities such as communal work, training, and tree planting are social actions that give birth to new symbols and shape a unique social reality.

The limitations in human resources are not only related to a lack of technical skills but also indicate a weakness in creating symbolic values that reflect professionalism within the organization. The lack of citizen participation shows that a shared identity viewing the tourism sector as a source of collective welfare has not yet been established. On the other hand, the success in sustainability aspects demonstrates that when the symbol of environmental conservation is strongly embedded in the community's consciousness, collective action can be effectively realized.

Therefore, the future development of Goa Lawah as a destination should not only prioritize technical and infrastructural aspects but also emphasize the formation of a symbolic culture: instilling values of trust, shared responsibility, and a collective vision that is understood and accepted by all elements of the community. With this approach, Goa Lawah will develop not merely as a tourist site but as a social space rich in meaning, hope, and the collective identity of the local community.

Appropriate Development to Optimize the Sustainable Management of Goa Lawah Lebah Sempage Nature Tourism

The sustainable management of Goa Lawah Lebah Sempage nature tourism requires a systematic, comprehensive development approach based on sustainability principles. Referring to various theories and expert opinions, the following strategies can be implemented:

1. Environmental Conservation as the Main Foundation

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As stated by Inskeep (1991), the sustainability of the tourism sector heavily depends on efforts to maintain the environmental conditions and ecosystems that serve as its main attractions. Therefore, the development of Goa Lawah should focus on conservation aspects, such as reforestation around the area, environmentally friendly waste management, and the implementation of zoning to protect vulnerable areas from the negative impacts of tourism activities. These measures are essential to ensure the long-term preservation of the area's natural attractions.

2. Strengthening the Quality of Local Human Resources

According to Swarbrooke (1999), human factors are key determinants of successful sustainable tourism management. Considering that Goa Lawah is still in its early stages of development, it is necessary to provide training for local communities in tourism management, visitor services, environmental education, and community-based promotion. Enhancing these competencies will equip the community with the skills needed to support professional and sustainable tourism management.

3. Encouraging Active Community Involvement

The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model described by Weaver (2006) is highly applicable to Goa Lawah. Involving the community in all stages of management, from planning and implementation to evaluation, will foster a strong sense of ownership of the destination. Active participation also ensures that the benefits of the tourism sector are directly enjoyed by the community economically, socially, and culturally, while encouraging them to protect the surrounding environment.

4. Long-Term Strategic Planning

Referring to Butler's (1999) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) theory, destinations in their early development stages, such as Goa Lawah, require comprehensive long-term planning. This plan may include the development of environmentally friendly infrastructure, the establishment of sustainable management standards, and the creation of educational trails for tourists to understand the importance of environmental conservation. The plan must be flexible to adapt to social dynamics and environmental changes.

5. Controlling Visitor Numbers and Area Capacity

In sustainable tourism practice, it is essential to adjust visitor numbers according to the ecosystem's capacity to prevent environmental degradation (Inskeep, 1991). Therefore, visitor management at Goa Lawah can be conducted through daily visitor quotas, online reservation systems, and the organization of guided tour routes to prevent damage to sensitive areas. In this way, the negative impacts of tourism activities can be minimized as much as possible.

V. CONCLUSION

The management of Goa Lawah tourism still faces various challenges, ranging from unresolved land ownership issues and limited human resource capacity to community participation that remains largely symbolic. Meanwhile, aspects of sustainability have begun to show positive developments through environmental conservation efforts. Therefore, the community is expected to take a more proactive role in the planning and implementation of tourism programs; the village government needs to formulate regulations based on sustainable development and strengthen cross-sector partnerships; and the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) must enhance its managerial capacity, professionalism, and collaboration with various stakeholders to support the development of Goa Lawah as a competitive and sustainable leading destination.

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