



Integrating Community-Based Ecotourism into Educational Development: Empowering Local Communities and Enhancing Sustainable Practices

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i4.1118>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Ecotourism,
Community
Empowerment,
Greenthing Beach

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This study examines the development of coastal community-based ecotourism in Probolinggo Regency and its impact on local community empowerment and income generation. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results indicate that local communities are actively involved in ecotourism through homestay management, local guides, traditional food production, and environmental conservation. Village institutions such as Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) play a crucial role in facilitating training and participation. Consequently, the community's monthly income increased by between IDR 500,000 and IDR 1,500,000, as well as a greater awareness of environmental and cultural preservation. Theoretically, this study contributes to educational development, particularly in community education and lifelong learning. It highlights how informal and non-formal education through training, mentoring, and hands-on experience can effectively empower rural communities. Ecotourism serves as a tangible learning space that promotes civic responsibility and the values of sustainable development. For educational institutions, these findings emphasize the importance of integrating community-based practices into the curriculum, particularly in the areas of tourism, environmental studies, and citizenship education, to strengthen the link between formal education and community empowerment efforts.

Article History:

Received: April 2025; Revised: May 2025; Accepted: June 2025

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Himmah, F., Laila, R.I.W.D (2025). Integrating Community-Based Ecotourism into Educational Development: Empowering Local Communities and Enhancing Sustainable Practices. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 4(4), 1402-1414.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country consisting of many islands, with thousands of islands spread throughout the country. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) released in 2022, Indonesia has a total of 17,000

islands. Furthermore, Indonesia's natural and cultural resources are abundant and can be utilized to promote the development of the tourism sector at the national level. Only a small portion of the available natural and cultural potential and wealth has been managed and expanded as a tourist attraction and serves as a lure to attract visitors, one of which is the coastal area (Inuq et al., 2023). Beach tourism is an activity that focuses on the richness of coastal resources and the culture of coastal communities, such as recreation, sports, and panoramic views. Randutatah Village in Paiton District is adjacent to the sea, making it a distinct advantage, especially in the beach tourism industry. One of the newest tourist destinations in this village is known as Greenting Beach. This beach offers not only sand and seawater but also a variety of exciting activities for visitors (Hindriyani et al., 2024).

Beach tourism is generally associated with activities like swimming, surfing, and other common activities. However, with the development of tourism, new approaches have emerged, such as ecotourism, which combines recreation with environmental conservation, such as nature photography, biodiversity observation, and educational activities involving local communities (Cheia, 2020). Coastal locations have great potential as ecotourism destinations due to their natural beauty, ecological uniqueness, and rich arts and culture (Ramli et al., 2021). Therefore, tourism management must be carried out sustainably, considering the balance between economic development and environmental preservation (Kiper, 2020). Community-oriented ecotourism aims to empower local residents through skill development and active participation in managing their region's potential. Collaboration between the community and the tourism sector is key to creating social, economic, and ecological benefits (Dogra & Gupta, 2019). Thus, ecotourism not only attracts local and international tourists but also serves as a means of nature conservation and strengthening local identity.

Ecotourism development in natural tourism areas can have a positive impact on both environmental conservation and the economic development of surrounding communities. One of the main benefits of community-based natural tourism management is its focus on environmental sustainability, particularly in the development of facilities and infrastructure that do not damage existing ecosystems. An intact ecosystem will be protected from damage caused by tourism infrastructure development, and local communities can be actively involved in ecotourism development, ultimately improving their economic well-being (Prihanta et al., 2017). The concept of ecotourism is based on the beauty of the scenery and the uniqueness of nature, including the characteristics of the ecosystem, the uniqueness of the local culture, and the characteristics of the local community, which are a special attraction for tourists. One area with great

potential for ecotourism is Greenthing Beach in Randutatah Village, Probolinggo Regency, East Java. This beach is managed by the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) Duta Bahari and has a main attraction in the form of natural beauty and the presence of a well-preserved mangrove forest. Mangroves in this area play a vital role in maintaining the balance of the coastal ecosystem, preventing coastal erosion, and providing habitat for various species such as fish, shrimp, and birds. The types of mangrove plants that grow there have unique adaptations to high-salinity environments, such as breathing roots, leaves that can excrete salt, and resilience to survive in muddy soil (Rusli et al., 2023) with its rich biodiversity and ecological functions, this area is a clear example of how ecotourism can develop alongside environmental conservation efforts and local community empowerment (Prihanta et al., 2016).

At Greenthing Beach, the surrounding waters boast a rich ecosystem that supports diverse marine life. These waters are directly connected to the open sea and are a crucial element in the area's natural sustainability. The seawater around Greenthing Beach tends to be clear, with moderate waves, making it ideal for various tourist activities, such as swimming, snorkeling, and fishing. Furthermore, the calm waters support coral reefs and various other marine species. The waters around this beach vary in depth, depending on the distance from the shoreline. Near the shore, the depth is relatively shallow, while the depth increases as one moves further out. These relatively calm waters allow various species of fish and other marine life to breed safely. This ecosystem is also crucial for the life of the mangroves that grow along the coast, as their roots connect with the seawater, which carries essential nutrients for the plants. Greenthing Beach began operating as a tourist destination on December 15, 2023 and was officially opened on January 1, 2024. Specific data regarding the number of visitors on weekdays received an average of 100 to 180 visitors per day, while on weekends, the number of visitors could reach 400 people, while the number of visitors each month averaged 2,400 and the majority of visitors were young people and family vacations.

The phenomenon relevant to the title "Community-Based Ecotourism Development as a Source of Income for Greenthing Beach in Randuta Village" encompasses various dynamics involving the relationship between the community, the environment, and the tourism sector. In this context, ecotourism based on nature conservation is increasingly gaining attention as a more environmentally friendly tourism alternative. This phenomenon occurs in line with increasing awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability, which encourages communities to develop tourism potential without damaging coastal ecosystems. On the other hand, a social phenomenon is also evident, namely the empowerment of local communities through their involvement in

tourism management. Communities are not merely spectators but also key actors in determining the direction of tourism development.

This creates opportunities for them to earn income through various tourism-related sectors, such as accommodation, tour guides, local product sellers, and micro-enterprises that support tourists. Furthermore, an economic phenomenon has emerged, where community-based ecotourism can become a major driver of local economic growth. By wisely utilizing natural potential, villages can generate income that can improve community welfare while supporting sustainable environmental conservation efforts. This phenomenon also brings about a shift in community mindset, from merely utilizing nature for daily needs to managing natural resources with a more long-term focus.

Based on the author's observations, there are several studies that are similar to the title of this research, such as the researcher Gede Wirata et al. in his journal "Community-based ecotourism development policy in Indonesia: Quadruple helix approach" (Wirata et al., 2023) this study analyzes the implementation of the quadruple helix model in community-based ecotourism development policies in Indonesia. The results show that collaboration between government, academics, industry, and local communities plays a crucial role in the success of ecotourism development. Furthermore, Malesa and colleagues (Anan et al., 2024) in its journal, this study highlights the importance of improving the knowledge and skills of village tourism residents in tourism management. The training provided successfully improved the quality of tourism products and coordination between stakeholders.

There are several theories that can be used as a foundation, including some relevant ones. Ecotourism theory focuses on the principles of environmental conservation, the active role of local communities, and sustainable economic benefits. According to Ceballos Lascurain, ecotourism is defined as travel to natural areas aimed at understanding and appreciating the environment, while simultaneously providing economic benefits to the local community. Furthermore, ecotourism should encourage education and increase environmental awareness among tourists. This theory emphasizes that tourism should involve local communities at every stage, from planning to management, and ensure they benefit from tourism activities. According to Murphy, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a tourism model that gives primary control to local communities, enabling them to achieve greater economic and social benefits. Furthermore, Scheyvens emphasizes that CBT should focus on improving community well-being while promoting environmental sustainability. Overall, this theory emphasizes the importance of active local community participation in ecotourism development and management. This participation encompasses various aspects, from planning to evaluation of

ecotourism activities, with the aim of ensuring sustainable benefits for the local economy, community, and environment (Asy'ari et al. 2021). This theory examines the impact of increased income on community well-being. Todaro and Smith explain that inclusive economic growth can improve community well-being if the benefits are distributed equitably. In this study, this theory will be used to analyze the contribution of ecotourism at Greenthing Beach to increasing the income and well-being of the local community (Pakpahan, 2018).

All of the statements above aroused the author's interest in evaluating how to increase the income of the Randuta village community through the development of community-based ecotourism on Greenthing Beach. This study aims to identify local potential, analyze the community's role in formulating appropriate strategies to support sustainable ecotourism development, and contribute to improving the economic welfare of the local community.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach to understand how community-based ecotourism development can become a source of income for the community at Greenthing Beach. The research location was Greenthing Beach, Randuta Village. The research subjects consisted of the village head, local tourism managers, local communities, and communities involved in ecotourism activities. Informants were selected purposively, selecting individuals or groups who have direct understanding and experience in ecotourism management. Data collection was carried out using several techniques. Observation was used to directly observe ecotourism activities, interactions between tourism actors, and available facilities and infrastructure. In-depth interviews were conducted with various parties, such as the community, tourism management, and the village government, to understand ecotourism management patterns and the economic benefits obtained by the community. In addition, documentation was used to collect data from various written sources, such as regulations related to ecotourism, scientific articles, and other supporting documents relevant to this research (Hardani, 2020).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews to explore the role of the community in management, challenges faced, and development opportunities. Participatory observation was conducted to understand economic activities and the physical condition of the coastal environment, while documentary data was obtained from interviews with tourism managers. The results of the study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the potential of the coastal area. Data analysis was conducted using the thematic analysis method. This analysis process includes several stages, namely data reduction by filtering relevant information, presenting data in narrative form and thematic categories, and

drawing conclusions based on the researcher's findings. This approach allows for the identification of key patterns in community participation and its impact on local economic well-being (Sugiono, 2013).

To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various respondents to enhance the validity of the findings. Furthermore, method triangulation was employed by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the data obtained. The research's credibility was also strengthened by member checking, which involved confirming the findings with informants to ensure they matched their experiences in the field. With this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of communities in ecotourism development and its impact on the local economy, thus providing a basis for developing more effective policies to support community-based ecotourism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

General description

Abdul Aziz is a figure from a tourism awareness group who developed the idea of building a tourist attraction called Duta Green. After the success of the beach, Abdul Aziz also planted sea pine trees to prevent abrasion. However, over time, Duta Green only operated for 4-5 months, with only 50 visitors per day. The Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes), along with young people from the local community, took the initiative to reopen Duta Green. After a lengthy discussion, the decision to reopen the beach was finally agreed upon with CSR Pomi. The initial opening date was December 15, 2023, and the inauguration date was January 1, 2024.

Since its inauguration as a tourist destination in early 2024, the local community has taken the initiative to manage this area as a community-based ecotourism destination that not only aims to improve the economic welfare of residents but also maintain environmental sustainability. This research was conducted to identify local potential, analyze the role of the community, and formulate strategies for sustainable tourism development. Greening Beach began operating as a tourist destination in December 2023. Specific data regarding the number of visitors on weekdays receives an average of 100 to 180 visitors per day, while on weekends, the number of visitors can reach 400 people. Meanwhile, the number of visitors per month averages 2,400 people, and the majority of visitors are young people and family vacations.

Table 1. Characteristics of informants

No	Characteristics	Category	amount	percentage
1.	Gender	Man	9	70%
		Woman	5	50%
2	Age	20-35 years old	5	50%
		>35	6	60%
		<45 years	2	20%
		20 years	1	10%
3.	last education	Elementary School	3	30%
		Junior High School/Senior High School	10	10%
		Bachelor	1	10%
4.	Work	Services/Facilities	4	40%
		Trader	5	50%
		tourism managers	1	10%
		Device	1	10%
		Tour guide	1	10%
		Bicycle storage	2	20%

(This data was taken in 2025 at Greenting Beach)

Community-Based Ecotourism Development

Greenting Beach became known to the public in late 2023, following the efforts of the Randutatah Village community, who took the initiative to develop the beach as an ecotourism destination. The beach is managed independently by residents through a tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) facilitated by the Duta Bahari Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). The community not only acts as implementers but also as managers, planners, and evaluators of tourism activities. Greenting Beach boasts several physical and environmental advantages, such as a clean white sandy shoreline, calm waves, and a large mangrove forest area. Mangrove forests act as natural protection against abrasion and provide habitat for fish, shrimp, and birds. The existence of this ecosystem is a major draw for tourists seeking educational and conservation tourism. The activities offered are simple yet educational, such as mangrove trekking trails, boat tours around the coast, seafood culinary tours, and a "mangrove planting" program that directly involves tourists. This aligns with ecotourism principles, which emphasize ecotourism experiences that are environmentally friendly and empower local communities.

The Role of Local Communities

The role of the community in ecotourism is not only as a beneficiary, but also as a key actor in the entire chain of tourism management. The community is involved from the beginning in planning, facility construction, and daily operations. This creates a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for the sustainability of the destination. In practice, the community is involved in the following roles: Acting as tour guides for mangrove and marine routes, Selling typical beach food and drinks at community stalls, Implementing a large-scale beach cleanup program, and providing incentive participation where local people participate in the form of labor, for example as doormen, parking attendants, and security guards. Furthermore, the community also has a transparent financial management mechanism through the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). Funds from tourism levies are distributed for operational costs, environmental preservation, and the welfare of Pokdarwis members.

Impact of Ecotourism Development

One of the most tangible impacts of ecotourism development at Greenthing Beach is increased community income. Before development, the community relied solely on fishing and other informal jobs. However, after the introduction of tourism, they gained additional income from facility rentals, guide services, and food sales. Based on interviews with informants, the average additional income of residents increased between Rp. 5,000,000 and Rp. 1,500,000 per month. In addition, several new micro-businesses began to emerge, including small cafes on the beach, life jacket and boat rental services, photography services, and ATV rentals. The resulting economic impact also supports the theory of inclusive development according to The resulting economic impact also supports the theory of inclusive development, which states that economic growth that includes community participation will improve sustainable prosperity. This is reflected in the growth of new MSMEs, such as food stalls and tourism equipment rental services, which states that economic growth that includes community participation will improve sustainable prosperity. This economic improvement also impacts the community's quality of life, as demonstrated by residents' increased ability to send their children to school, repair their homes, and purchase motor vehicles.

Table 2. Economic Impact

Type of business/services	Description	Average income (per month)	Information
Local SMEs	Selling food and drinks	600,000-1,000,000	Depends on the number of visitors
Tourist Equipment	Renting equipment such	1,200,000	Rates Rp. 5,000–10,000 per

Rental	as life jackets, boats and ATVs		visitor
Travel Photography Services	Offering direct photos at tourist attractions	500,000	Average rate Rp. 2,000/photo
Tour guide	Non-certified guides for educational tours or tourist villages	1,300,000	Depends on the number of people in the group
Motorcycle and car storage	Maintaining tourists' bicycles	500,000-1,000,000 per week	Motorcycle fare Rp. 5,000; car Rp. 10,000

(This data was taken in 2025 at Greenting Beach)

Ecological Impact

The presence of tourism actually encourages environmental conservation in this area. Activities such as mangrove planting, beach cleanups, and environmental education are part of the tour packages. Tourists not only enjoy the natural beauty but also participate directly in preserving the ecosystem. The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) and the community regularly develop conservation schedules, collect data on mangrove growth, and distribute environmental information boards along tourist routes. These activities not only maintain ecosystem balance but also foster a new awareness among residents about the importance of preserving nature as a source of income.

Socio-Cultural Impact

Ecotourism has a positive impact on social relations between residents. Mutual cooperation activities have become more intense, particularly in beach cleanups and facility construction. Furthermore, the involvement of youth and housewives in tourism businesses has created more equitable employment opportunities. Furthermore, multi-stakeholder involvement in tourism management, although still limited, is leading to the implementation of the quadruple helix approach as described where collaboration between communities, government, academics, and business actors is considered the key to the success of community-based ecotourism.

Local culture also finds a place in ecotourism. Performances of traditional coastal sea pluck rituals, and various events for tourists, include New Year's Eve celebrations, aerobics classes, Earth Day, and the inauguration of environmental ambassadors, all of which serve as opportunities for village cultural preservation.

Discussion

The results of the discussion indicate that the development of ecotourism at Greenting Beach has had a significant impact on the local community, both

economically, socially, and environmentally. This demonstrates that community-based tourism (CBT) management has been effectively implemented in the field (Hasanah, 2024). The active involvement of residents in beach management, such as providing tourism services, conservation programs, and joint activities, demonstrates the community's direct participation in utilizing the region's potential (Prihanta et al., 2017). This aligns with the statement (Jamalina & Wardani, 2017) which states that CBT places local communities as the main actors, so that they not only function as workers but also as managers and recipients of economic benefits from the tourism sector.

Economically, there was an increase in community income of between IDR 500,000 and IDR 1,500,000 per month. This finding supports that ecotourism can be a driver of the local economy by creating micro-business opportunities, employment, and economic turnover in villages (Wirata et al., 2023). Furthermore, the participation of youth and women's groups in tourism activities also contributes to more equitable and equitable economic development. Social impacts are also evident in the increased sense of solidarity within the community through joint activities, such as the construction of tourism facilities, beach cleanups, and cultural events (Hartadji, 2024). Community empowerment in the tourism sector not only provides economic benefits but also strengthens social values and a sense of ownership of the region's potential (Alone 2025).

Ecotourism development in coastal areas such as Greenthing Beach also contributes to environmental conservation efforts. Mangrove planting programs by the community and tourists have improved the condition of the coastal ecosystem. Combining tourism activities with conservation programs is a sign of successful sustainable ecotourism (Hasanah, 2025). Furthermore, the management carried out by the Duta Bahari Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) and the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) demonstrates collaboration between local institutions (Hidayat et al., 2024). The importance of strengthening institutions and human resource capacity for the success of tourism villages (Asy'ari et al. 2021). Without strong institutional support, tourism activities risk being temporary and unsustainable.

However, there are various challenges to be overcome. Several obstacles, such as a lack of supporting facilities, poor digital promotion, and minimal training in tourism services, require immediate attention (Baharun, 2023). This was also agreed by (Wirata et al., 2023), which explains that tourism villages will be successful if managed with a quadruple helix approach, namely collaboration between the community, government, academics, and the private sector. Thus, this discussion shows that the development of community-focused ecotourism at Greenthing Beach has been carried out in accordance with the principles of CBT and sustainable development, although it still requires capacity building and

cross-sector support to ensure long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The development of ecotourism involving the community at Greenthing Beach, Randutatah Village, Paiton District, has had a positive impact on the local population. The community's active involvement in the management of the tourist destination, through small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism services, and environmental conservation activities, demonstrates that they are not merely objects of interest but also key drivers of village tourism development.

Economically, ecotourism activities directly increase community income, with additional income ranging from IDR 500,000 to IDR 1,500,000 per month. Businesses that have emerged include food stalls, tourism equipment rentals, photography services, vehicle storage, and local tour guides. This supports efforts to improve the welfare and quality of life of villagers. Socially and environmentally, community participation in mangrove planting programs, beach cleanups, and the involvement of young people and housewives in tourism have created a positive impact on environmental awareness and social solidarity among residents. Furthermore, the existence of local organizations such as Pokdarwis (Tourism Groups) and BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises) plays a significant role in strengthening the management and sustainability of tourism programs. However, several challenges remain, such as limited supporting facilities, a lack of digital promotion, and limited training for the community. Therefore, support from various sectors, human resource capacity building, and sustainable development strategies are needed so that the benefits of ecotourism can continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

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