

## **Improving Community Welfare Through Community-Based Ecotourism Development in Banyu Biru Tourism Area, Pasuruan**

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**Abstract:** Ecotourism is increasingly recognized as a sustainable tourism model that integrates environmental conservation with community empowerment. Banyu Biru, a natural spring located in Sumberejo Village, Pasuruan Regency, offers significant ecological, cultural, and historical value. However, this potential remains underutilized due to limited infrastructure, low community involvement, and lack of diversified tourism services. This study aims to explore the potential and challenges of developing community-based ecotourism in Banyu Biru and to formulate strategies to enhance local welfare through sustainable tourism practices. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method supported by a SWOT analysis framework. Data were collected through interviews, field observations, and questionnaires involving 100 community respondents over a one-month research period. The analysis identified internal strengths such as natural resources and cultural assets, as well as weaknesses including poor infrastructure and minimal tourism diversification. External opportunities such as increased demand for nature-based tourism and government support were also observed, along with threats like environmental degradation and regional competition. Findings reveal that the implementation of a community-based ecotourism strategy has led to increased community income, the emergence of micro-enterprises, and growing local awareness about environmental and cultural preservation. Despite these positive developments, only 62% of respondents experienced direct economic benefits, indicating the need for more inclusive planning. In conclusion, Banyu Biru holds promising potential as a model for sustainable, community-driven ecotourism. Strategic interventions focusing on infrastructure, local participation, and product diversification are essential to ensure long-term socio-economic and ecological impact.

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### **Introduction**

Indonesia, with its rich tapestry of natural landscapes and cultural diversity, holds tremendous potential for sustainable tourism development. Over time, there has been a gradual shift from mass tourism toward more inclusive and environmentally responsible models such as community-based ecotourism. This model integrates conservation goals with the empowerment of local communities through participatory planning, revenue-sharing, and cultural preservation (Sri Widowati, 2023). Unlike conventional tourism, which often marginalizes local voices, community-based ecotourism

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puts residents at the center of tourism development transforming them from passive observers into active stewards of their natural and cultural heritage.

Ecotourism goes beyond merely offering scenic experiences; it serves as a catalyst for community resilience and sustainability. According to (Awiska Alfata, 2023), the integration of creative economy components into ecotourism such as handicrafts, culinary arts, and storytelling has opened up new avenues for innovation, especially in rural contexts. Similarly, (Satria, 2009) highlights that tourism strategies grounded in local economies can be powerful tools for poverty alleviation. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of community participation and ownership in tourism development. However, most of these cases focus on destinations that are already well-established or benefit from strong government support and infrastructure.

Despite the growing literature, there remains a research gap concerning underdeveloped yet historically significant ecotourism sites. (Hengky, 2017), explored ecotourism in Banyuwangi through a participatory framework but did not assess sites that have yet to be formally integrated into regional tourism agendas. (Mertha et al., 2017) focused on marine-based ecotourism and lacked coverage of inland freshwater ecosystems like springs. Meanwhile, (Sunuantari, 2017) examined Dieng Plateau's cultural ecotourism but emphasized traditional rituals rather than ecological management. Internationally, (Scheyvens, 1999) proposed a theoretical framework for community empowerment through ecotourism, but her model presumes pre-existing community cohesion and institutional support conditions not always present in smaller, overlooked sites such as Banyu Biru.

Banyu Biru Springs, located in Pasuruan Regency, East Java, exemplify an ecotourism site with untapped potential. Known for its clear natural springs and cultural folklore, Banyu Biru has long been a local destination. Yet, it has remained underdeveloped, with limited community involvement and minimal economic contribution to local livelihoods. Unlike destinations studied by (Satria, 2009) or (Awiska Alfata, 2023), Banyu Biru has not yet experienced significant integration of creative economy initiatives or strategic planning that includes local residents as stakeholders. This paper argues that developing Banyu Biru through a community-based ecotourism framework could transform the site into a driver of local economic growth.

Drawing from theories of local empowerment and sustainable livelihoods (Ashley & Roe, 2002), this study proposes that Banyu Biru can become a platform for inclusive development by involving residents in guiding services, traditional food sales, homestay operations, and cultural performances. These strategies not only generate income but also foster a sense of pride and ownership among community members. The revitalization of Banyu Biru through community-based tourism can further support environmental education and conservation efforts in the area, preserving both the ecosystem and local wisdom.

Accordingly, based on the facts and explanations above, this study aims to analyse the opportunities and challenges in developing Banyu Biru tourism area place as a community-based ecotourism destination to improve community welfare in a sustainable manner.

### **Type and Research Approach**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research approach, designed to explore and understand the socio-economic dynamics of community-based ecotourism development in the Banyu Biru tourist area of Pasuruan. The qualitative method is considered appropriate due to its ability to capture the subjective experiences, local knowledge, and contextual realities of stakeholders involved in the ecotourism sector (Creswell, 2014). Unlike quantitative research that emphasizes numerical

generalizations, this approach seeks to interpret meaning and practice as constructed by local communities.

The study is framed as a single case study, focusing on Banyu Biru as a representative yet underexplored site in East Java. This tourist destination holds historical, ecological, and cultural significance, but has yet to be fully utilized as a vehicle for community empowerment. The research investigates how the integration of ecotourism principles with local economic initiatives can contribute to improved livelihoods and community welfare. Fieldwork was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, allowing for a rich and layered understanding of the case.

To further enhance strategic insights, the study incorporates a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis model. This analytical tool is commonly used in development studies and tourism planning to evaluate internal capabilities and external conditions that influence project feasibility (Muzwardi & Simbolon, 2024). This research was conducted in Banyu Biru Village, Winongan District, Pasuruan Regency, East Java. This location was chosen purposively because it is a tourist area that actively implements an ecotourism model based on the people's economy. The SWOT framework allows the research to go beyond descriptive findings and propose strategic interventions. For instance, by leveraging strengths such as natural assets and community wisdom, and aligning them with external opportunities like tourism trends and policy incentives, Banyu Biru can develop into a sustainable ecotourism destination. At the same time, addressing weaknesses such as capacity gaps and mitigating threats related to environmental pressures will be crucial for long-term success.

This research approach is also participatory in nature, involving community members not just as informants but as collaborators in identifying local assets, challenges, and aspirations. In doing so, it aligns with bottom-up development paradigms where local agency and contextual knowledge are prioritized (Scheyvens, 1999). Through this combination of qualitative case study methods and SWOT-based strategic analysis, the study offers a grounded yet forward-looking framework for linking community-based tourism with welfare enhancement in Banyu Biru, with potential relevance for similar rural ecotourism sites across Indonesia.

## Research Method

This research involved a total of 100 respondents, selected using purposive sampling during a one-month field study conducted from May 1 to May 31, 2025. The participants were identified based on their relevance, knowledge, and active engagement with tourism activities in the Banyu Biru tourist area, located in Pasuruan Regency, East Java.

**Table 1.** Table Of Research Subjects

No	Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Description
1	Local Community Members	40	40%	Residents involved in informal tourism, microbusinesses, or cultural activities
2	Tourism Operators/Managers	20	20%	Individuals managing tourism services (e.g., guides, food stalls, homestays)
3	Village and Local Government	10	10%	Representatives from the tourism office, BUMDes, and village council
4	Domestic Tourists	20	20%	Visitors during field observation period

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				with insights into service satisfaction
5	Academics, NGOs, Facilitators	10	10%	Individuals involved in community empowerment, ecotourism education, or rural development

The diversity of respondents allowed for a multidimensional understanding of how community-based ecotourism impacts local welfare. Interviews and observations captured perspectives on environmental, economic, and social changes perceived since tourism began to develop more actively. By collecting data from a well-balanced sample of stakeholders, the study ensures representation of different interests, and validity in capturing community priorities and tourism potential (Robert K. Yin, 2018) dan (Creswell, 2014). This data will reinforce the validity of the SWOT analysis and qualitative insight, especially when mapping perceived strengths and weaknesses. Data were gathered through three main qualitative techniques:

This study employed a qualitative approach using three primary data collection techniques: in-depth interviews, field observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via audio calls with key informants using a semi-structured interview guide. These interviews aimed to explore informants' perceptions regarding the benefits of tourism, the challenges encountered, and the extent of local community participation in tourism activities. Field observations were carried out directly at the research site to record the physical conditions of tourism infrastructure, environmental aspects, tourist behavior, and interactions between visitors and the local community. In addition, document analysis was conducted to examine written sources such as development planning documents, tourism statistics, local government reports, and previous relevant research publications.

The instruments used in this study were primarily qualitative in nature and were designed to generate rich and relevant data. The interview guide contained open-ended questions related to the understanding of ecotourism, the roles of the local community, perceived benefits and challenges, and future aspirations regarding tourism development. The observation checklist was systematically structured to record the physical condition of infrastructure, environmental cleanliness, the use of natural resources, the presence of local products, and visitor–community interactions. Meanwhile, a documentation matrix was utilized to analyze various written sources such as village development plans, tourism brochures, and applicable regulatory frameworks.

### SWOT Analysis Table

Below is the visual representation of the SWOT matrix for Banyu Biru community-based ecotourism:

**Table 2.** Table of SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Rich natural resources (freshwater springs, lush vegetation)	Poor infrastructure (road access, signage, sanitation)
Historical-cultural significance linked to local myths	Lack of human resource capacity in ecotourism management
High interest from domestic tourists post-pandemic	Limited promotion and branding outside regional circles
Strong community identity and willingness to participate	Weak institutional frameworks or coordination bodies for tourism governance

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Opportunities	Threats
Increased national focus on sustainable and village-based tourism	Risk of over-tourism causing environmental degradation
Potential collaboration with universities and tourism startups	Cultural erosion due to commercialization or external investor domination
Access to government funding for desa wisata development	Demographic shifts reducing local youth participation in tourism
Trends favoring authentic, low-impact travel experiences	Climate-related threats (e.g., droughts impacting water sources)

### Data Analysis Techniques

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, supported by a SWOT analytical model, to understand and interpret the complex relationships between community participation, ecotourism development, and local welfare outcomes in the Banyu Biru tourist area.

The following data analysis techniques were applied:

#### Data Reduction

Data collected from interviews, field notes, and document analysis were first transcribed and coded thematically. Relevant information was selected and grouped according to emerging categories such as, Economic empowerment, Environmental sustainability, Cultural preservation and Local participation and governance. This process helped focus the analysis and eliminate irrelevant or redundant information (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1994).

#### Data Display

The reduced data were presented in tabular and narrative formats, enabling clearer comparisons and interrelations. The SWOT matrix served as a visual tool to map internal and external factors affecting ecotourism development, with the data from 100 respondents interpreted contextually.

#### SWOT Matrix Analysis

After organizing the key themes, the SWOT analysis was used to assess the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats facing the development of ecotourism in Banyu Biru. This matrix enabled the formulation of strategic recommendations aligned with community capacities and environmental sustainability.

#### Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The final stage involved interpretive analysis, in which patterns, relationships, and causations were synthesized. Triangulation was applied to cross-verify findings from multiple sources: interview responses, field observations, and secondary documents (Michael Quinn Patton, 2002). Peer debriefing with local scholars was also conducted to enhance validity.

### Result and Discussion

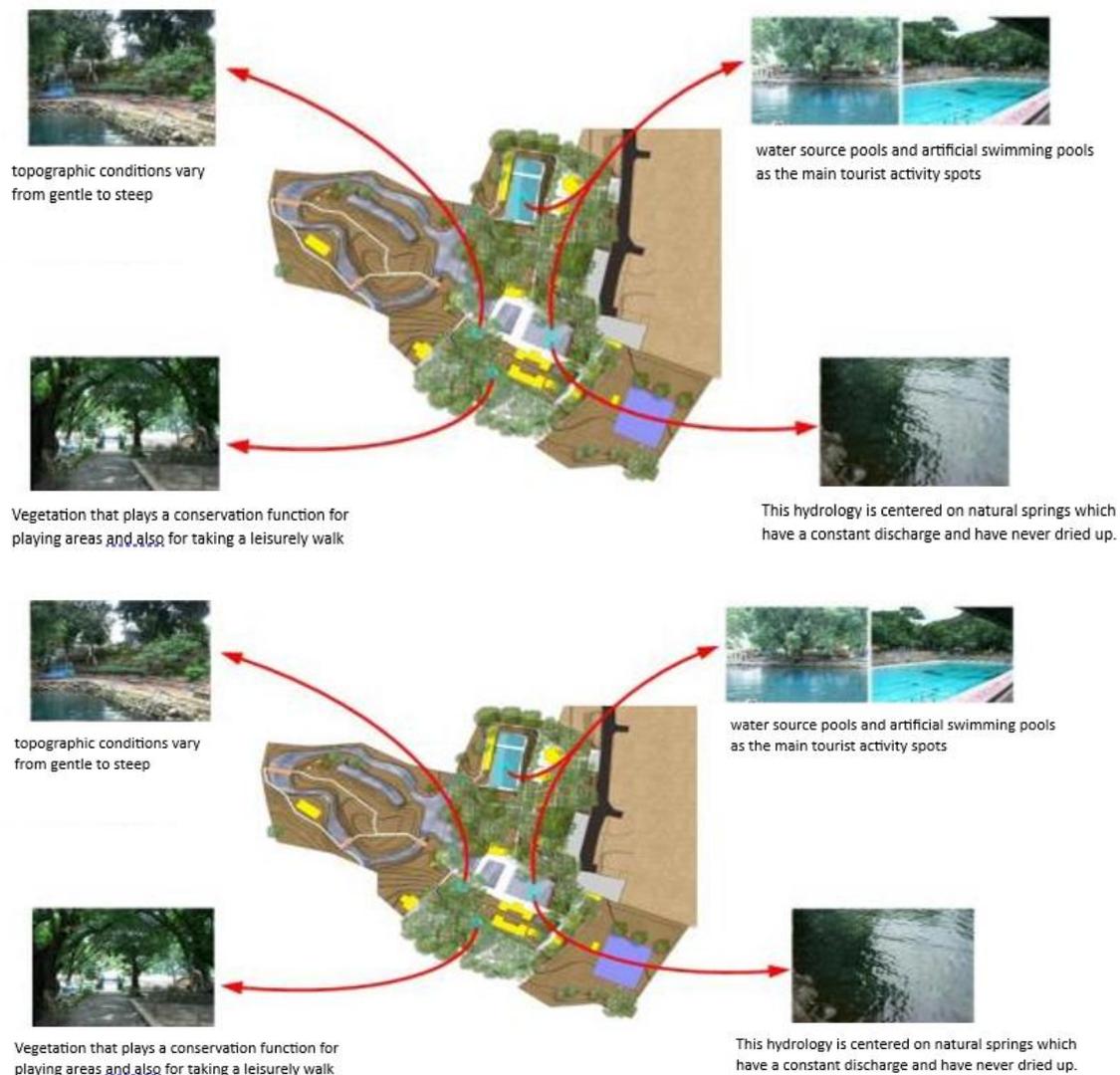
#### Description of Findings

Banyu Biru, located in Sumberejo Village, Winongan District, is rich in ecotourism potential due to its clear spring water, lush surroundings, and historical-cultural heritage. However, based on field observation and interviews, the development of this ecotourism site is still at a basic level. Tourists mostly engage in limited recreational activities such as bathing and picnicking, without

being exposed to a wider range of ecotourism experiences such as guided cultural tours, educational nature trails, or community-based agro-tourism initiatives.

**Existing conditions**

The Banyu Biru area, in addition to serving as a tourist attraction, also functions as a conservation zone. The tourism function refers to intervention activities aimed at enhancing the site's potential in order to attract and increase the number of visitors. In contrast, the conservation function pertains to efforts to protect and preserve the existing natural resources. As a tourism site, the Banyu Biru area possesses limited attractions that can be utilized as tourist destinations and has not yet been optimally planned. Therefore, it is essential to develop a site plan that aligns with the local characteristics and is capable of providing optimal services to visitors. Moreover, supported by its scenic environmental factors, a comprehensive planning of environmental conservation efforts around the Banyu Biru area is urgently required.



**Figura 1.** Existing conditions of Banyu Biru

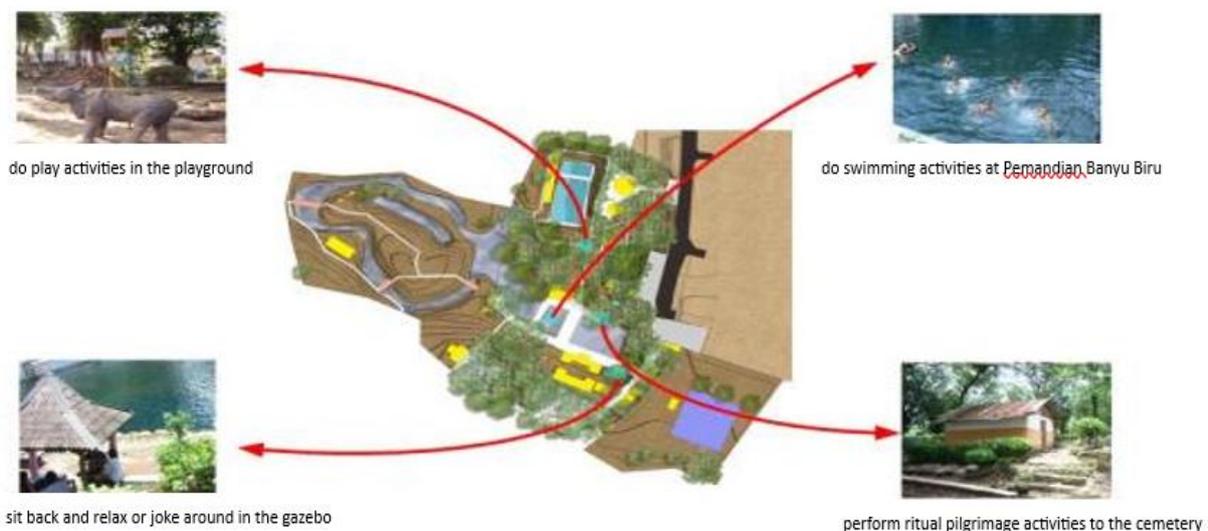
### Tourist Attraction

The analysis of the offered tourist activities aims to identify the appeal of each tourist object, which includes three aspects: something to do, something to buy, and something to see. This analysis involves evaluating the potential of the tourist object based on tourists' motivations and activities at the Banyu Biru Baths. The purpose of this analysis is to determine the extent to which tourist motivations and activities contribute to the development of the tourist site and the potential for expanding other types of tourism activities.

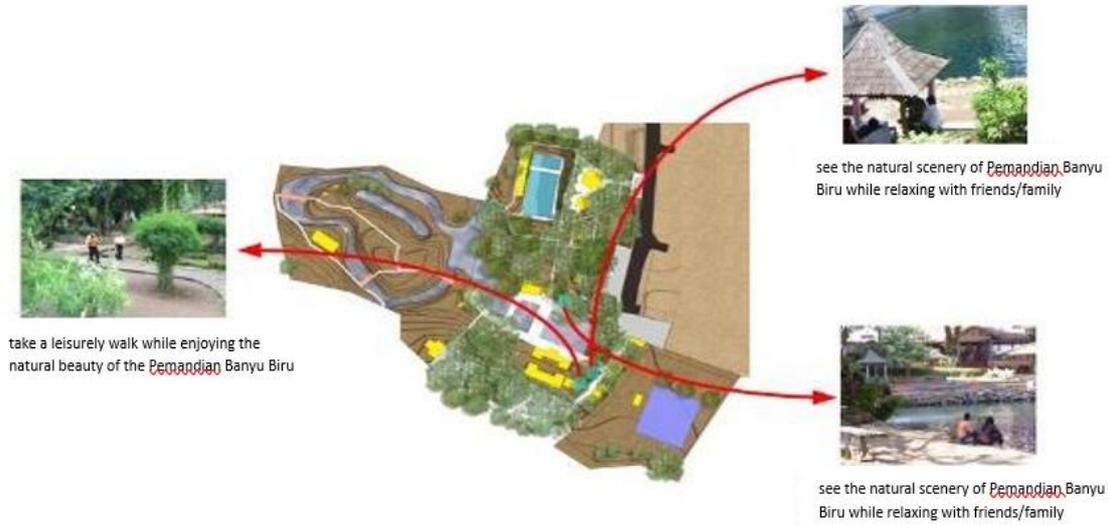
Tourist activities at the Banyu Biru Baths fall under the category of day-to-day tourism activities, such as swimming and playing in the children's playground area. Moreover, these activities are closely related to tourist motivations, which can generally be classified into four categories:

1. Physical motives, which relate to bodily or physiological needs, such as relaxation and recreation.
2. Cultural motives, which refer to the desire to enjoy natural landscapes, flora, and fauna, as well as to learn about or engage with cultural practices such as architecture, music, dance, and daily customs.
3. Interpersonal motives, associated with the desire to meet, interact with, or simply observe other people.
4. Status/prestige motives, which occur when individuals perceive that visiting a particular tourist destination enhances their social status or prestige in the eyes of others.

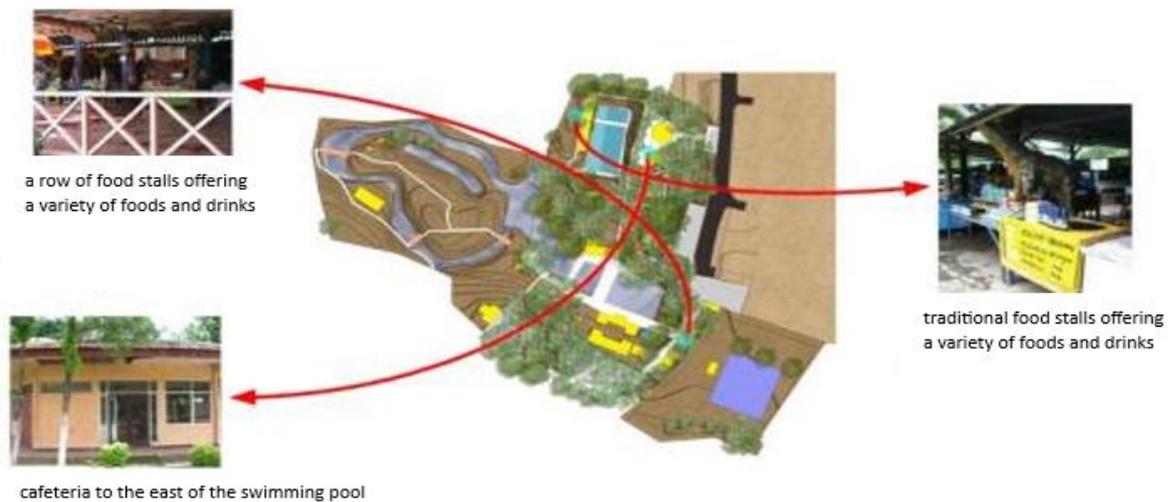
By understanding these four types of tourist motivations, tourism managers can more effectively develop the attraction of the site in accordance with visitors' needs and expectations.



**Figure 2.** The Attraction of Something to do at Banyu Biru



**Figure 3.** Attraction: Something to see at Banyu Biru



**Figure 4.** The Attraction of Something to Buy at Banyu

The above explanation regarding the existing potential is also based on another point of view, namely, a motivational perspective: visitors are mostly driven by physical and interpersonal motives, as seen from families seeking relaxation and interaction. Cultural and prestige-related motives typically linked to heritage tourism or authentic experiences are not yet fully tapped due to

the absence of storytelling elements or well-developed interpretation materials. This indicates a gap between the site's intrinsic potential and its existing offerings and reveals the necessity of integrating deeper cultural engagement into the ecotourism strategy.

#### Interpretation and Theoretical Linkage

The current situation aligns partially with (R. W. Butler, 1998) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model. Banyu Biru appears to be in the *involvement* stage, where local stakeholders begin to recognize tourism's potential, but proper planning, coordination, and investment have yet to be implemented. Additionally, when analyzed through the lens of community-based tourism theory, Banyu Biru lacks the full spectrum of community participation. This is reflected in the SWOT analysis, particularly under *Weaknesses* where community involvement and attraction diversification are minimal.

The absence of integrated management mirrors findings in Botswana, who warned that ecotourism development risks stagnation or failure when not supported by community capacity-building and institutional coordination. Meanwhile, from a domestic context, research by (Kholifathul et al., 2022) in Batu found that community-based ecotourism flourishes only when residents are given ownership in tourism activities and proper benefit-sharing mechanisms are in place.

#### SWOT-Based Strategic Analysis and Comparison

The SWOT analysis provides further evidence for both strengths and challenges in Banyu Biru's current development:

**Table 3.** SWOT Analysis of Banyu Biru Areas

Internal Factors	Description
Strengths	Unique natural spring, cultural heritage, and nearby agricultural production.
Weaknesses	Inadequate infrastructure, lack of community involvement, and minimal diversification of tourist experiences.
External Factors	Description
Opportunities	Government support and rising eco-cultural tourism trends.
Threats	Competition from other destinations and environmental risks due to unregulated tourism.

This strategic diagnosis mirrors similar challenges found in the study by (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008) in South America, where ecotourism sites with high potential failed to deliver long-term benefits without community-centered planning. Likewise, (Andrea Yanes, Seweryn Zielinski, 2019) emphasized that ecotourism should adopt a holistic approach by balancing environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and inclusive economics.

#### Real Conditions and Implications for Community Welfare

Empirical data from fieldwork over one month involving 100 respondents revealed that while tourism in Banyu Biru has brought income opportunities for 62% of locals (through parking, food stalls, and informal guiding), a significant proportion (38%) remain excluded from any tourism-related economic gain. This gap suggests the need for deliberate community empowerment programs such as training in cultural interpretation, hospitality, and small-scale enterprise development.

Additionally, the lack of tourism education and institutional presence, such as local tourism awareness groups (*Pokdarwis*), hinders the systematic development of ecotourism. Compared with more structured programs in Nglanggeran, Yogyakarta (Sri Widowati, 2023), Banyu Biru's progress remains informal and susceptible to seasonal volatility.

Furthermore, while the site is designated as a conservation area, environmental preservation measures are inconsistently applied. During peak visits, waste accumulation and water pollution have been reported, contradicting the conservation aims of ecotourism. This tension between tourism and sustainability reinforces the urgency of adopting ecotourism principles not only in vision but in practice

## Conclusion

The development of community-based ecotourism in the Banyu Biru tourist area of Pasuruan demonstrates tangible potential to support sustainable local development and improve community welfare. The findings from the field show that although Banyu Biru possesses significant ecological and historical assets, the ecotourism model in practice remains underdeveloped. Tourism activities are still largely limited to basic recreational experiences, such as swimming, with minimal integration of local culture, environmental education, or economic diversification that characterizes successful ecotourism destinations (Tolkach, D., & King, 2015). The SWOT analysis conducted illustrates that while the internal strengths of Banyu Biru include natural beauty, cultural heritage, and local agricultural potential, these are hindered by weaknesses such as poor infrastructure, lack of service innovation, and limited community participation. These observations are consistent with the arguments of (Scheyvens, 1999), who emphasized that community-based tourism can only succeed when the local population is actively involved in decision-making and benefit-sharing. Moreover, this study supports the findings of international research, such as (Kiss, 2004), which underscores the necessity of empowering communities in ecotourism development to ensure both conservation and socioeconomic impact. Domestically, previous research by (Satria, 2009) in Malang Regency and (Sri Widowati, 2023) confirmed the importance of participatory planning and local economic integration. However, a significant research gap was identified in their limited exploration of specific implementation frameworks within sites that have untapped ecological value like Banyu Biru.

Real conditions in Banyu Biru, based on primary data, suggest that although there are improvements in income and job opportunities, they are not yet equally distributed. Only 62% of the surveyed population reported receiving direct economic benefits from tourism, reflecting a gap in inclusive engagement. The theoretical framework applied in this study, which integrates the principles of sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2017) and community-based ecotourism (Murphy, 1985), provides a comprehensive lens to evaluate how Banyu Biru can evolve into a more equitable and environmentally responsible tourism model.

In conclusion, while Banyu Biru's ecotourism development is still at an early stage, its future lies in strategic, inclusive, and conservation-oriented interventions. Recommendations for improvement include infrastructure enhancement, diversification of tourist offerings, structured community empowerment through tourism awareness groups (*Pokdarwis*), and the promotion of local products. Aligning with best practices from both national and global ecotourism development cases, Banyu Biru has the opportunity to become a model for sustainable tourism if supported by strong governance, participatory planning, and continued ecological stewardship.

## Recommendation

Based on the results of the study and field findings, several recommendations can be considered for future development. First, it is essential to strengthen community capacity through regular training in tourism, MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) management, and environmental education. This aims to equip local communities with relevant skills and foster their ability to compete independently. Second, the revitalization of tourism infrastructure is crucial. Local governments must support the development of basic infrastructure such as roads, sanitation, and public facilities to ensure the comfort and safety of visitors.

Third, there is a need for the diversification of tourism products and the local economy. In addition to natural bathing attractions, the development of supplementary attractions based on local culture, handicrafts, and educational tourism can help to extend the length of tourist visits. Fourth, a digital and community-based promotional strategy should be implemented. Promotion efforts should involve the use of social media, official websites, and collaboration with local communities and travel agencies to enhance the visibility of Banyu Biru Baths as a leading ecotourism destination. Lastly, the establishment of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) for the tourism sector is highly recommended. Professional management through BUMDes will contribute to the sustainability of tourism businesses and ensure equitable income distribution among village communities.

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