



Sustainable Tourism and Community Participation in Indonesia: Comparative Insights from Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo

Muslim Afandi¹, Syed Agung Afandi^{2*}, Rizki Erdayani³, Nail Hidayat Afandi⁴

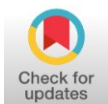
^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau. Riau, Indonesia

⁴Universitas Negeri Malang. Jawa Timur, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: syedagungafandi@uin-suska.ac.id²

<https://doi.org/10.69812/itj.v2i3.198>

Article Info



Article History

Received:

5 November 2025

Revised:

20 November 2025

Accepted:

30 November 2025

Abstract:

This study conducts a comparative analysis of sustainable tourism dynamics in Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo by examining three interrelated dimensions: environmental sustainability, community participation, and governance arrangements. Using a qualitative comparative case study design and document analysis of 50 policy documents, academic studies, institutional reports, and planning frameworks published between 2018 and 2024, the research identifies significant variations in how sustainability is operationalized across destinations. Bali exhibits advanced tourism development but faces severe ecological pressures, fragmented governance, and unequal benefit distribution. Yogyakarta demonstrates the most coherent sustainability model, characterized by strong community-based tourism institutions, participatory co-governance, and locally grounded environmental stewardship. Labuan Bajo, as a national super-priority destination, shows a tension between conservation imperatives and centralized, investor-driven development that limits substantive local participation. The cross-case synthesis reveals that sustainable tourism outcomes depend on the alignment of environmental practices, community empowerment, and multi-level governance coordination. Theoretically, the study contributes to sustainable tourism governance scholarship by proposing a typology of governance configurations hybrid customary-regulatory, participatory co-governance, and centralized authority-based models. Policy implications emphasize the need to strengthen community institutions, enhance regulatory coherence, and adopt destination-specific strategies to ensure that tourism development supports ecological integrity, cultural resilience, and social equity.

Keyword: Community, Participation, Sustainable, Tourism



INTRODUCTION

Tourism remains one of Indonesia's most strategic development sectors, underpinning national economic growth, employment generation, cultural preservation, and regional competitiveness. As the country continues to position tourism as a key driver of development, the sector's performance is increasingly viewed not only through

revenue and visitor numbers, but also through its capacity to sustain local livelihoods and protect ecological and cultural assets over time. Recent indicators demonstrate the sector's scale and policy relevance. In 2023, tourism generated approximately USD 10.46 billion in revenue, supported national recovery priorities, welcomed more than 10 million international visitors, and recorded over 734 million domestic trips (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023; Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Republic of Indonesia, 2023). These figures confirm tourism's centrality within Indonesia's development agenda, but they also signal the magnitude of governance and sustainability challenges that accompany continued expansion.

The rapid growth of tourism particularly in flagship destinations such as Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo has intensified pressures on natural resources, socio-cultural systems, and the equitable distribution of economic benefits. While tourism can strengthen community income and cultural visibility, unmanaged expansion may accelerate environmental degradation, contribute to socio-economic inequality, and produce uneven development outcomes across local groups and regions.

This tension between growth and sustainability is increasingly urgent because it threatens the very foundations of destination competitiveness. Environmental decline, cultural commodification, and governance inconsistency can erode visitor experiences, reduce community support, and trigger conflicts over land, resources, and development priorities. In this sense, the sustainability question is not peripheral; it is a core prerequisite for ensuring tourism remains a durable contributor to Indonesia's long-term development.

Academic literature emphasizes that sustainable tourism development is inseparable from environmental stewardship, meaningful community participation, and effective multi-level governance. Sustainable outcomes tend to emerge when ecological limits are recognized, local communities are empowered to shape decisions, and coordination among government, private actors, and civil society is structured and accountable (Cichocka, 2016; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Hidayat & Khalika, 2019; Miles et al., 2014). This scholarship provides a strong foundation for examining how sustainability is operationalized across different destination contexts.

Within this broader field, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has become a central approach for linking tourism benefits to local empowerment. CBT highlights local involvement in decision-making, equitable benefit-sharing, and the preservation of cultural authenticity, while collaborative governance perspectives stress cross-actor coordination and shared responsibility in complex policy environments. Together, these perspectives suggest that sustainability depends not only on technical environmental measures, but also on institutional arrangements that shape who participates, who benefits, and who holds authority.

However, studies of sustainable tourism in Indonesia are often localized and fragmented, frequently focusing on individual tourism villages, ecotourism initiatives, heritage sites, or community programs. Although these studies generate valuable insights, they commonly provide limited comparative understanding of how different socio-cultural contexts and governance capacities shape sustainability outcomes across destinations. As a result, there remains a gap in explaining why similar sustainability goals produce divergent results in different places. Addressing this gap is increasingly relevant given Indonesia's national priorities, including commitments to the

SDGs, the super-priority destination program, and the broader transition toward green and inclusive tourism. These policy directions place heightened expectations on destinations to align economic objectives with ecological protection, social equity, and governance accountability expectations that are difficult to meet without a clearer understanding of contextual variation and implementation capacity.

Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo represent three contrasting tourism contexts that make this comparative need especially clear. Bali is a mature international destination with strong customary institutions, yet it faces ecological strain and widening economic disparities. Yogyakarta offers a distinctive model of community-driven tourism embedded in cultural governance. Labuan Bajo illustrates dilemmas typical of rapidly developing conservation-based destinations, where state-led investment and institutional centralization can reshape local participation and benefit-sharing. Despite these contrasts, few studies examine these destinations side-by-side within one analytical framework.

To respond to this limitation, the present study advances a systematic comparative analysis of Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo through three interconnected dimensions: (1) environmental sustainability practices, (2) community participation and empowerment, and (3) governance and policy frameworks. By organizing the discussion around these dimensions, the study clarifies how sustainability is implemented in practice, how local actors are engaged (or excluded), and how institutional arrangements enable or constrain long-term outcomes.

Accordingly, the study is guided by two core research questions: How do environmental sustainability practices, community participation, and governance arrangements differ across Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo? In what ways do these variations influence each destination's capacity to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes, and how do they inform broader theoretical debates on CBT and collaborative governance in Indonesia? By articulating these questions and applying a cross-destination comparison, the study strengthens its originality and contribution linking empirical variation to theoretical insight and generating evidence-based implications for Indonesia's evolving tourism governance landscape.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative comparative case study design to analyze environmental sustainability, community participation, and governance arrangements in three major Indonesian tourism destinations Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo. The comparative case study approach was selected because it enables analytical replication across contexts and allows the researcher to trace how socio-cultural, environmental, and governance variations shape different sustainability outcomes (Yin, 2018). The three cases were chosen through purposive sampling based on their contrasting levels of tourism maturity, institutional complexity, and development orientations, aligning with recommendations for purposeful and information-rich case selection in qualitative research (Kamba, 2018).

To construct a robust dataset, the study relied solely on document analysis covering the period 2018–2024, representing recent policy cycles, post-pandemic transitions, and the implementation of Indonesia's super-priority tourism development agenda (Bappenas, 2023; Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Republic of

Indonesia, 2023). The documents analyzed included national policy frameworks such as the RPJMN and RIPPARNAS, regional tourism master plans (RIPPDA), annual reports from the Labuan Bajo Flores Authority (Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores, 2023), tourism village development reports, sustainability assessments, academic literature, and reputable reports produced by institutions such as UNESCO (2023), WWF Indonesia (2024), Systemiq (2023), and Badan Pusat Statistik (2023). In total, fifty documents were reviewed, comprising eighteen related to Bali, fifteen to Yogyakarta, and seventeen to Labuan Bajo, ensuring balanced representation across destinations.

Table 1. Simplified Methodological Flowchart

Step	Stage	Main Focus / Output
1	Case Selection	Bali, Yogyakarta, Labuan Bajo
2	Document Collection	Policy documents / reports / academic literature (2018–2024) Total N=50
3	Coding	Deductive (from the framework) + Inductive (emerging from data) Focus: Sustainability, Participation, Governance
4	Thematic Analysis	Intra-case analysis (each destination analyzed separately)
5	Cross-Case Synthesis	Cross-case comparison → convergence/divergence & context-specific dynamics → linked back to research questions

Source: Author's processing, 2025

Document selection followed explicit inclusion criteria, including publication within the 2018–2024 timeframe, relevance to the study's three analytical themes, empirical or regulatory value, and credibility of institutional authorship, consistent with qualitative document analysis standards (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). Documents were excluded if they lacked methodological grounding, contained unverifiable information, or duplicated data without offering added analytical value. Data extraction was guided by a structured review protocol to ensure consistency across cases and to facilitate transparent interpretation.

The coding procedure combined deductive and inductive strategies: deductive coding was derived from the conceptual framework focusing on environmental sustainability, community participation, and governance arrangements (Hidayat & Khalika, 2019; Ikhwan, 2019), while inductive coding allowed emergent themes such as investor dominance, customary governance dynamics, or conservation development tensions to surface from the data, following practices recommended by Miles et al. (2014). Coding proceeded through iterative reading, verification, and refinement to maintain analytic reliability.

Data analysis employed a thematic content analysis approach complemented by cross-case synthesis. Each destination was first analyzed independently to identify internal patterns before being systematically compared to reveal convergent, divergent, and context-specific dynamics. This methodological strategy aligns with established comparative analysis frameworks in tourism governance research (Bramwell & Lane, 2012; Hall, 2011). Research validity was strengthened through data source triangulation, cross-document verification, and transparent coding procedures, which enhance the dependability and credibility of qualitative findings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability practices across Indonesia's major tourism destinations Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo demonstrate substantial variation, reflecting differences in tourism maturity, institutional capacity, and ecological vulnerability. These variations highlight how local environmental strategies are shaped not only by policy frameworks but also by socio-cultural norms, destination competitiveness, and the presence or absence of collaborative governance. Overall, the evidence suggests that each destination is positioned at a different stage of the sustainability continuum: Bali facing post-growth environmental strain, Yogyakarta advancing community-driven ecological stewardship, and Labuan Bajo struggling to balance conservation with rapid development pressures.

In Bali, escalating ecological pressure has become a structural challenge linked to rapid tourism expansion and the dominance of mass-tourism economic models. The province generates more than 1,600 tons of waste daily in major tourism zones such as Kuta, Ubud, and Nusa Dua (Badan Pusat Statistik Bali, 2023), yet nearly 52 percent of this waste remains unmanaged (The Straits Times, 2024). Systemiq's (2023) assessment further indicates that approximately 33,000 tons of plastic enter Bali's rivers and coastal ecosystems annually, underscoring persistent gaps in waste collection and recycling infrastructure.

Regulatory efforts including the provincial ban on single-use plastics (Governor Regulation No. 97/2018) have contributed to growing environmental awareness, but implementation remains inconsistent due to weak enforcement mechanisms and the island's heavy dependence on high-volume visitor flows. Civil society initiatives, notably Sungai Watch, have collected over 1.7 million kilograms of waste since 2020, while the Bali Hotels Association (2025) reports that 48 percent of hotel waste is now processed through sorting and recycling schemes. Despite these improvements, Bali's environmental management approach remains reactive rather than transformative, illustrating the limits of sustainability policies in contexts dominated by commercial tourism pressures and fragmented institutional coordination (Cole & Browne, 2015).

In contrast, Yogyakarta demonstrates a more community-centered model, where ecological sustainability is closely integrated with community-based tourism practices and local cultural stewardship. Tourism villages such as Nglanggeran, Pentingsari, and Kaki Langit Mangunan have institutionalized waste management initiatives, small-scale renewable energy adoption, and water conservation programs that directly involve local residents (Hidayat & Khalika, 2019; Kementerian Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, dan Transmigrasi, 2023).

The internationally recognized Nglanggeran Tourism Village exemplifies this approach through practices such as community-regulated land use, organic agriculture, and conservation financing mechanisms, earning recognition from the UNWTO as a "Best Tourism Village" (UNWTO, 2021). Eco-innovations also emerge from local operators such as Moana Sustainable Tour, which has implemented cycling-based tourism, plastic-free tour packages, and coastal mangrove restoration initiatives with over 1,200 planted trees (Moana Indonesia, 2023).

Nevertheless, Yogyakarta faces environmental pressures in densely visited urban and heritage zones such as Malioboro and Prambanan, where traffic congestion, informal

street economies, and inadequate waste handling systems undermine ecological quality. Despite these urban challenges, Yogyakarta's environmental practices illustrate a governance model rooted in local participation, social consensus, and adaptive community innovation characteristics identified as key drivers of sustainability in developing-country tourism contexts (Cichocka, 2016).

Labuan Bajo, meanwhile, represents a destination situated at the intersection of conservation imperatives and rapid development pressures. As the gateway to Komodo National Park (KNP), the area hosts highly sensitive terrestrial and marine ecosystems, including more than 4,000 Komodo dragons and critical habitats within the Coral Triangle (UNESCO, 2023). Government efforts to implement carrying capacity frameworks, environmental zoning, and differentiated conservation ticketing aim to safeguard ecological integrity; however, environmental governance remains constrained by top-down decision-making and limited enforcement (Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores, 2023).

WWF Indonesia (2024) reports that environmental regulations for tourism operators particularly waste management and marine resource protection—are either inconsistently applied or lack sufficient monitoring systems. The entry of large-scale investors developing port infrastructure, premium hotels, and waterfront resorts near conservation zones has raised concerns over spatial commodification and the long-term viability of conservation objectives. At the community level, emerging initiatives such as the Eco Flores Network and local mangrove restoration programs indicate growing ecological awareness, yet these efforts remain small-scale and lack institutional backing or stable funding (Foundation, 2024; Network, 2023).

Comparatively, the three destinations reflect a clear environmental sustainability gradient shaped by tourism maturity and governance structure. Bali, the most mature destination, faces post-growth ecological degradation driven by mass-tourism dependency and fragmented regulatory enforcement. Yogyakarta offers the strongest model of community-integrated ecological management, where environmental quality is upheld through local ownership, cultural norms, and grassroots innovation. Labuan Bajo, still in a developmental phase, confronts acute ecological vulnerability exacerbated by centralized planning, limited community participation, and investor-driven development patterns.

These findings reinforce broader arguments in sustainable tourism scholarship that environmental outcomes depend not solely on formal policy, but on the alignment between institutional capacity, local participation, and the socio-economic development trajectory of a destination (Cichocka, 2016; UNWTO, 2023). In this context, environmental sustainability across Indonesian destinations is best understood as a function of how effectively governance actors internalize ecological objectives within tourism development strategies whether through regulatory enforcement, community empowerment, or the integration of conservation principles into investment and spatial planning decisions.

2. Community Participation

Community participation is a central pillar of sustainable tourism, shaping how benefits are distributed, how cultural integrity is maintained, and how communities develop the capacity to manage tourism-related change. The comparative analysis of

Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo demonstrates that community participation in Indonesia operates along a broad continuum from deeply institutionalized customary involvement, to highly organized and democratic community-based governance, to emerging yet still constrained participation under centralized development agendas. These differences reveal how socio-cultural structures and power relations condition the forms and effectiveness of community engagement in tourism management.

In Bali, community participation is grounded in long-standing customary institutions particularly *desa pakraman* and *banjar* which regulate social obligations and communal activities, including those related to tourism (Cole, 2012; Surata, 2018). The integration of *Tri Hita Karana* values reinforces a moral obligation to maintain harmony between humans, nature, and spirituality, providing an ethical basis for community involvement. These customary structures function as intermediaries between state agencies and local communities, enabling collective decision-making regarding ceremonies, land use, and cultural tourism activities. However, despite this strong institutional foundation, significant inequalities persist in the distribution of economic benefits. Research shows that large investors and foreign-owned enterprises capture a disproportionate share of tourism revenue, while local communities often receive only limited benefits through small-scale services and ritual offerings (Warren, 2020).

The commercialization of customary land in high-demand areas such as Canggu, Seminyak, and Ubud has further intensified concerns about gentrification and the erosion of local economic autonomy. Government programs promoting community-based tourism have sought to restore community control, yet implementation remains uneven because of coordination challenges among *banjar* and variations in managerial capacity (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Nevertheless, emerging grassroots initiatives such as the Bali Community-Based Tourism Association (BCBTA) and eco-innovation networks signal an evolving push toward more equitable community participation grounded in sustainability principles (Sugiarto, 2022).

In Yogyakarta, community participation is more democratic, inclusive, and structurally organized compared to Bali. The region's tourism development model is heavily shaped by tourism villages (*desa wisata*) where local communities retain substantive control over planning, management, and benefit distribution. Villages such as Nglanggeran, Pentingsari, and Kaki Langit Mangunan exemplify successful CBT practices, where revenue-sharing systems are transparent, community ownership is clear, and decision-making processes involve broad-based participation (Hidayat & Khalika, 2019; Kementerian Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, dan Transmigrasi, 2023). The internationally recognized success of Nglanggeran awarded as a UNWTO Best Tourism Village illustrates how community cohesion, cultural stewardship, and long-term environmental care can be effectively integrated into destination management.

A notable feature of Yogyakarta's model is the active involvement of *Pokdarwis* (Kelompok Sadar Wisata) and BUMDes, which serve as institutional anchors for mobilizing local participation. In addition, partnerships with universities such as Universitas Gadjah Mada and Sanata Dharma strengthen managerial capacity through training, product innovation, and evidence-based planning. This combination of grassroots initiative, local governance, and academic collaboration makes Yogyakarta a national benchmark for participatory tourism governance, characterized by social

transparency, deliberative consensus, and strong local ownership (Ikhwan, 2019; Madjid, 2002).

Labuan Bajo presents a markedly different community participation landscape. As one of Indonesia's super-priority destinations, tourism development in Labuan Bajo is dominated by centralized planning led by the national government and the Labuan Bajo Flores Authority (BPOLBF). Although national policies emphasize community inclusion, studies indicate that local communities particularly those living around Komodo National Park often experience limited involvement in key decisions, including tourism zoning, conservation fees, and marine transportation regulations (Tourism Concern Indonesia, 2023; WWF Indonesia, 2024).

The tensions surrounding the sharply increased KNP entrance fee in 2022 illustrate the disconnect between policy intentions and community realities; local guides, MSMEs, and boat operators protested the policy, arguing that they were not adequately consulted. Despite these challenges, pockets of community engagement have begun to emerge. Initiatives such as the Eco Flores Network, community-led mangrove restoration programs, and homestay development in island communities like Papagarang and Komodo reflect increasing grassroots mobilization. These initiatives, however, remain fragile and require stronger institutional support, access to funding, and formal recognition within regional development planning (East Ventures, 2024; EcoFlores, 2023).

Comparatively, the three destinations illustrate a distinct participation continuum shaped by governance structures and socio-cultural norms. Bali demonstrates institutionalized but structurally unequal participation, mediated by customary institutions yet constrained by market-driven tourism expansion. Yogyakarta represents the most mature, democratic, and community-driven model, where local residents exercise high autonomy, participate in decision-making, and enjoy relatively equitable benefit distribution.

Labuan Bajo reflects emerging and still restricted participation, where communities remain peripheral to formal decision-making despite their centrality to conservation and cultural identity. These findings reinforce theoretical arguments that meaningful community participation requires not only formal recognition but also equitable power distribution, institutional transparency, and long-term capacity building (Cichocka, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). Across these cases, community participation functions not merely as an operational component of tourism development but as a transformative mechanism shaping social justice, local empowerment, and destination resilience in Indonesia's evolving tourism landscape.

3. Tourism Governance and Policy Framework

Tourism governance across Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo reflects markedly different institutional arrangements and actor constellations, shaping how effectively sustainability principles are integrated into destination development. These variations underscore the central role of governance in mediating relationships between economic interests, environmental responsibilities, and community welfare. The comparative analysis shows three distinct governance paradigms: a hybrid customary-regulatory model in Bali, an inclusive co-governance model in Yogyakarta, and a top-down authority-led model in Labuan Bajo. Each paradigm carries implications for coordination

capacity, policy coherence, and the distribution of decision-making power among stakeholders. In Bali, tourism governance operates through a hybrid institutional structure that combines formal provincial regulations with deeply embedded customary institutions such as *desa pakraman* and *banjar*. Since the island was positioned as Indonesia's international tourism showcase in the 1970s, governance has oscillated between central government directives, provincial regulations, and localized cultural control (Picard, 2015).

While customary institutions play a crucial role in maintaining cultural authenticity and social cohesion, they coexist with governmental bodies such as the Bali Tourism Office and the Regional Tourism Promotion Board (BPPD). However, this pluralistic structure often results in fragmented coordination, especially concerning environmental enforcement, spatial planning, and accommodation development (Dredge & Jamal, 2019). Conflicts frequently arise between provincial zoning plans and investment permits issued by national agencies, illustrating weak policy coherence and overlapping authority. Although programs such as the "Bali Green Province" initiative and the Bali Tourism Management Board (BTMB) aim to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, implementation gaps persist due to insufficient monitoring mechanisms, heterogeneous stakeholder interests, and the dominance of market-driven tourism priorities (Cole & Browne, 2015).

Yogyakarta presents a governance model that is comparatively more inclusive, decentralized, and participatory. The region's tourism governance is shaped by its long-standing tradition of deliberative decision-making and community empowerment, which align with the national pentahelix framework involving government, academia, businesses, communities, and media (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Yogyakarta's Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPDA 2020–2025) integrates tourism villages, cultural heritage protection, and community-based economic initiatives as core elements of tourism policy. Unlike Bali's more fragmented model, Yogyakarta's governance is characterized by clear institutional roles, participatory budgeting mechanisms, and transparent communication channels across district governments and community groups (Ikhwan, 2019).

Institutions such as Pokdarwis, BUMDes, and the Tourism Village Communication Forum (Forkom Dewi) help facilitate knowledge-sharing, inter-village innovation exchange, and collaborative problem-solving. Academic partnerships with universities such as UGM reinforce evidence-based policy planning, capacity-building, and evaluation. The resulting governance model is what Madjid (2002) describes as *co-governance*, where community participation is not merely symbolic but substantively integrated into decision-making processes. This participatory orientation enhances policy responsiveness, social legitimacy, and the sustainability of tourism initiatives at the grassroots level.

Labuan Bajo represents a contrasting governance dynamic dominated by centralized authority and top-down development planning. As part of Indonesia's National Super-Priority Destinations (DSPN), the region is governed by the Labuan Bajo Flores Authority, which holds direct mandate from the central government to regulate spatial planning, investment, and tourism infrastructure (Badan Pelaksana Otorita Labuan Bajo Flores, 2023). While the authority model is intended to accelerate

development and attract large-scale investment, it has reduced local government and community participation in strategic decision-making (Aditya & Hakim, 2022).

WWF Indonesia (2024) notes that local communities around Komodo National Park have limited opportunities to influence policies related to conservation zoning, tourism quotas, and fee structures. This absence of deliberative engagement became evident during the 2022 protests against increased conservation ticket prices, which communities argued were implemented without adequate consultation. Although BPOLBF has initiated collaborative forums such as the Pentahelix Coordination Forum and the Labuan Bajo Tourism Authority Collaboration Hub, these mechanisms remain advisory in nature and lack binding influence on strategic decisions (Tourism Concern Indonesia, 2023). Consequently, Labuan Bajo's governance structure reflects a participation gap characterized by centralized policy control, dependency on external investors, and limited mechanisms for local accountability.

Comparatively, the governance trajectories of Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo reveal three structurally different models that influence the extent to which sustainability goals can be achieved. Bali's hybrid model blends cultural legitimacy with regulatory systems but suffers from fragmented coordination and limited enforcement, particularly in managing environmental pressures. Yogyakarta demonstrates the strongest alignment between governance structure and sustainability outcomes, with its co-governance model fostering collaborative decision-making, policy transparency, and strong community ownership.

Labuan Bajo, by contrast, embodies a centralized governance paradigm where rapid development and investor interests overshadow community empowerment and inclusive deliberation. These findings are consistent with broader theories of collaborative governance, which argue that sustainable tourism emerges when actor relationships are balanced, information flows are transparent, and decision-making authority is equitably distributed (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bramwell & Lane, 2012; Hall, 2011). In sum, governance effectiveness across Indonesian destinations is not determined solely by regulatory frameworks, but by the institutional capacity to coordinate diverse stakeholders, incorporate local values, and harmonize economic ambitions with ecological and social priorities.

4. Cross-Case Synthesis: Environmental Sustainability, Community Participation, and Governance

A cross-case comparison of Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo reveals that the trajectories of sustainable tourism across Indonesia's major destinations are shaped not by environmental capacity alone, but by the interplay between ecological practices, community participation structures, and governance models. When examined holistically, the three cases illustrate how sustainability outcomes emerge as the cumulative result of socio-cultural foundations, institutional arrangements, and economic development pressures, producing distinct patterns across destinations.

From an environmental sustainability perspective, the three destinations occupy different positions along a maturity vulnerability spectrum. Bali embodies an advanced tourism economy that has transitioned into a phase of ecological stress, with waste production, coastal degradation, and infrastructural overcapacity outpacing the regulatory system's ability to respond. Yogyakarta, in contrast, demonstrates a more

balanced model in which environmental stewardship is embedded within community norms and tourism village practices, enabling low-impact innovation at the local level. Labuan Bajo, meanwhile, faces acute ecological vulnerability due to its proximity to Komodo National Park and the Coral Triangle, but struggles to align conservation imperatives with large-scale development pressures driven by national priority programs. These patterns indicate that environmental outcomes are not merely determined by biophysical conditions but by governance structures and community control over resources.

Patterns of community participation show even clearer divergence across cases. Bali's participation is characterized by strong institutionalization through customary bodies, yet these channels have limited influence in countering rapid commercial expansion or investor-led development, resulting in widening benefit inequalities. Yogyakarta represents the most robust form of community participation, where decision-making, benefit-sharing, and tourism management are substantively controlled by local groups such as Pokdarwis and BUMDes.

In Labuan Bajo, participation is still emerging and remains largely superficial within formal planning processes, as centralized governance and investor dominance restrict local communities' ability to shape tourism policy. These contrasts suggest that participation is most effective when community institutions possess legal, financial, and organizational authority not merely cultural legitimacy or symbolic recognition. Governance structures reinforce and amplify these differences. Bali's hybrid customary regulatory governance creates cultural cohesion but institutional fragmentation, limiting policy coherence and enforcement capacity. Yogyakarta's co-governance model anchored in pentahelix collaboration, participatory budgeting, and transparent inter-village networks offers the strongest alignment between governance design and sustainability outcomes.

Labuan Bajo's authority-based governance centralizes control in national institutions, reducing deliberative spaces for local governments and communities, and producing policy tensions that directly affect conservation and livelihoods. These governance distinctions demonstrate that sustainable tourism is not achievable through regulation alone; it requires coordination systems, inclusive decision-making platforms, and mechanisms that balance local, national, and private sector interests. Synthesizing the three themes reveals a multilayered pattern: destinations with stronger community participation and more collaborative governance tend to exhibit more sustainable environmental practices.

Yogyakarta exemplifies this alignment, where participatory institutions enable integrative environmental management and reinforce social accountability. Bali demonstrates that cultural institutions without effective regulatory coordination cannot adequately respond to mass-tourism induced ecological pressures. Labuan Bajo shows how centralization and limited participation create governance deficits that exacerbate environmental vulnerability, despite the presence of strong conservation mandates. These findings align with broader theoretical perspectives in collaborative governance and community-based tourism, which emphasize that sustainability emerges from the interaction of institutional capacity, community empowerment, and adaptive governance, rather than from environmental policy alone.

Overall, the cross-case synthesis demonstrates that the path to sustainable tourism in Indonesia requires rebalancing governance authority, strengthening community institutional power, and embedding ecological accountability within planning and investment decisions. The three destinations collectively show that environmental sustainability is inseparable from the social and governance systems that shape how tourism is designed, negotiated, and managed.

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Environmental Sustainability, Community Participation, and Governance Across Three Destinations

Dimension	Bali	Yogyakarta	Labuan Bajo
Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High ecological pressure due to mass tourism • 1,600+ tons of daily waste; 52% unmanaged (BPS Bali, 2023; The Straits Times, 2024) • Plastic leakage ~33,000 tons annually (Systemiq, 2023) • Partial progress through local bans & civil society action (e.g., Sungai Watch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong integration of eco-practices within tourism villages (waste management, conservation, renewable energy) • Community-led innovations (Nglanggeran, Pentingsari) • Urban zones less sustainable due to congestion and informal economy pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High environmental sensitivity (Komodo NP, Coral Triangle) • Carrying capacity concerns; weak regulation of tourism operators • Investor-driven waterfront development risks spatial commodification • Emerging local conservation initiatives but limited systemic impact
Community Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally embedded participation via desa pakraman and banjar • Tri Hita Karana as moral framework • Economic gains unequally distributed; land commodification increases inequality • Limited influence on strategic decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongest CBT model nationally • Pokdarwis, BUMDes, and inter-village forums are highly functional • Transparent revenue-sharing; robust community control • Supported by universities and local government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation largely consultative rather than substantive • Centralized decision-making limits community influence on key policies (zoning, ticketing) • Grassroots initiatives emerging (Eco Flores, local homestays) but under-resourced
Governance Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid customary-regulatory model • Institutional fragmentation: customary and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most participatory and coordinated governance • Pentahelix model institutionalized; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority-led centralized governance under BPOLBF

Dimension	Bali	Yogyakarta	Labuan Bajo
	<p>formal actors misaligned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited enforcement, especially in environmental management Growing but uneven collaborative initiatives 	<p>strong inter-stakeholder communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear roles, consistent policy frameworks (RIPPDA) Academic partnerships support evidence-based governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerates infrastructure but reduces local autonomy Limited deliberative spaces; collaboration forums mostly advisory Governance deficits exacerbate community-policy tension
Overall Sustainability Orientation	Mass-tourism dependent; reactive sustainability improvements; regenerative shift still limited	Community-driven, adaptive, and socially cohesive; strongest alignment with sustainability principles	Conservation-constrained but development-driven; sustainability undermined by centralized governance

Source: Author's processing, 2025

The matrix highlights clear structural differences among the three destinations that collectively influence sustainability outcomes. Bali represents a mature but ecologically stressed system where customary institutions provide cultural continuity, yet governance fragmentation and mass-tourism dependence undermine environmental management and community empowerment. Yogyakarta offers the most balanced sustainability model, where participatory governance, strong community institutions, and integrated environmental stewardship reinforce one another, producing more equitable and resilient outcomes. Labuan Bajo occupies a transitional and vulnerable position in which environmental sensitivity and rapid development collide, and centralized governance reduces community influence despite their critical role in conservation.

Taken together, the matrix underscores that sustainable tourism is most attainable when community participation, environmental stewardship, and governance structures are mutually reinforcing, as seen in Yogyakarta. In contrast, Bali and Labuan Bajo illustrate how sustainability is weakened when these elements are misaligned—through commercialization pressures, fragmented regulatory authority, or centralized policy design that limits local agency. The comparative analysis shows that sustainable tourism in Indonesia depends on aligning environmental management, community participation, and governance capacity. For Bali, policy priorities include strengthening environmental enforcement, reforming land governance to curb speculative development, and ensuring community investor benefit-sharing mechanisms. Enhancing the regulatory authority of the Bali Tourism Management Board would also reduce institutional fragmentation and support more coherent sustainability governance.

In Yogyakarta, the focus is on scaling the successful tourism village model by improving the capacity of Pokdarwis and BUMDes, expanding inter-village learning networks, and formalizing partnerships with universities for monitoring and innovation. Incorporating CBT indicators into regional planning and conducting environmental risk assessments are essential to ensure that tourism expansion remains socially inclusive and ecologically balanced. For Labuan Bajo, policy reforms should rebalance centralized authority by instituting mandatory community consultation protocols and creating co-management arrangements in Komodo National Park. Strengthening community capacity for sustainable marine tourism, improving AMDAL processes with community input, and implementing an integrated carrying capacity framework are critical for protecting its vulnerable terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Across destinations, Indonesia must enhance multi-level governance coordination, standardize community-based tourism capacity-building programs, adopt a national sustainability certification system, and integrate climate-risk assessments into tourism master plans. Together, these actions are essential for ensuring that tourism development advances ecological integrity, community welfare, and long-term resilience. This study is limited by its exclusive reliance on secondary documents produced between 2018 and 2024, which, while providing broad coverage, may reflect institutional or narrative biases and underrepresent community voices or informal practices typically captured through primary fieldwork.

The document-based approach also constrains the depth of empirical validation regarding lived experiences, power relations, and intra-community dynamics. Moreover, the comparative framework cannot fully capture internal variations within each destination such as differences between urban and rural areas in Bali or between island and mainland communities in Labuan Bajo which may influence sustainability outcomes. Future research should incorporate primary data collection, including ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and household surveys, to provide a more grounded understanding of governance tensions and environmental pressures. Longitudinal and multi-site studies would also help trace how destinations adapt to shifting political priorities, climate risks, and market transformations. Expanding analysis to other destinations like Lombok or Raja Ampat and integrating interdisciplinary methods such as ecological monitoring and spatial analysis would further strengthen the evidence base for assessing how sustainable tourism practices evolve over time.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study demonstrates that sustainability outcomes in Bali, Yogyakarta, and Labuan Bajo arise from the interaction of environmental practices, community participation, and governance structures rather than environmental policy alone. The three destinations reveal distinct trajectories: Bali exhibits strong cultural cohesion but faces ecological strain, fragmented regulation, and unequal benefit distribution; Yogyakarta offers the most coherent model where participatory governance and empowered community institutions support resilient and equitable sustainability practices; while Labuan Bajo reflects a centralized, investment-oriented approach in which conservation demands intersect with limited community influence and governance asymmetries.

The study contributes theoretically by showing that sustainable tourism governance is a relational outcome shaped by the alignment of environmental stewardship, institutional authority, and multi-level coordination. It also proposes a typology of governance configurations hybrid customary regulatory, participatory co-governance, and centralized authority-based models that can inform broader policy design. These insights underscore the need for Indonesia to strengthen community institutions, enhance governance coherence, and embed environmental accountability into planning and investment processes to ensure that tourism development supports ecological integrity, cultural resilience, and social equity across the archipelago.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our sincere gratitude and appreciation are extended to all parties who have provided support, especially to the Institute for Research and Community Service of Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau its valuable assistance.

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