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Youth-Led Community-Based Tourism Development in Coastal Communities: Evidence from Natsepa Beach, Maluku, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines how youth-led initiatives contribute to community-based tourism development in coastal communities, focusing on Natsepa Beach, Maluku, Indonesia. It investigates how youth agency is translated into collective action, local entrepreneurship, environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and community-based tourism governance. A qualitative single-case study was conducted using an interpretive approach, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and relevant community and tourism documents. Participants were purposively selected from youth tourism actors, local entrepreneurs, community and traditional leaders, village government representatives, tourism managers, residents, and government officials. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns of youth agency, collective action, social innovation, economic engagement, environmental practices, cultural participation, and institutional interaction. The findings show that young people function not merely as tourism participants but as local change agents who initiate collective activities, create small-scale economic opportunities, support environmental management, and reinforce community and cultural values. However, the transformative capacity of youth initiatives remains conditioned by training, infrastructure, institutional support, inter-organizational coordination, and government engagement. The study contributes to community-based tourism scholarship by conceptualizing youth-led tourism development as a process through which youth agency is transformed into collective action and social innovation, connecting economic, environmental, cultural, and governance dimensions of local development.

Keywords: *Community-Based Tourism, Coastal Communities, Cultural Preservation, Environmental Stewardship, Local Entrepreneurship*

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism development in coastal communities is often presented as a promising pathway for generating local income, creating employment, and strengthening the social and cultural assets of communities whose livelihoods are closely connected to coastal resources. Yet, the presence of attractive natural resources does not automatically translate into sustainable tourism development. The central challenge is not simply how to attract visitors, but how tourism can be organized in ways that enable local communities to exercise meaningful influence over the development process, retain a fair share of its benefits, and

protect the social, cultural, and environmental resources on which tourism itself depends. This concern is particularly important in small-island and coastal settings, where economic opportunities may be relatively concentrated, infrastructure may be unevenly developed, and environmental resources are simultaneously livelihood assets and tourism attractions. Sustainable tourism therefore requires more than economic expansion; it requires forms of local agency, collective action, and governance capable of balancing economic interests with social and ecological considerations (Dn et al., 2026; Santoso, 2025; Zuska & Zulkifli, 2026).

Natsepa Beach in Maluku, Indonesia, provides a particularly relevant setting in which to examine this problem. Natsepa has long been recognized as one of the prominent coastal tourism destinations in Ambon and possesses considerable potential for marine and recreational tourism. Earlier research on Natsepa emphasized its natural attractions, accessibility, and potential for marine tourism development (Ariska et al., 2026). More recent attention has also considered the role of marketing and the combination of beach and culinary tourism in strengthening the destination's image (Quang et al., 2023). These studies demonstrate that the physical and economic potential of Natsepa is relatively well established. What remains less clear, however, is how tourism development is actually produced through relationships among local actors and, more specifically, who takes initiative in organizing tourism-related activities at the community level. The question is therefore not merely whether local people participate in tourism, but whether particular groups within the community are able to transform participation into sustained forms of agency and collective action.

This distinction matters because community participation has long been treated as one of the central principles of community-based tourism (CBT), yet participation itself is neither uniform nor necessarily empowering. Community involvement may range from receiving information and providing labor to exercising influence over planning, resource management, and decision-making. (Boemiya et al., 2023), for example, demonstrated that community participation in tourism can take different forms and may be shaped by competing interests among local stakeholders. Similarly, more recent scholarship has questioned the assumption that participation naturally produces empowerment. Participation and empowerment may reinforce one another, but empowerment requires communities to possess sufficient agency to influence tourism processes rather than merely being incorporated into decisions made elsewhere (Prananta et al., 2024). Recent reviews likewise indicate that community involvement in tourism is frequently concentrated around economic benefits and consultation, while political and cultural dimensions of empowerment remain less developed (Agussaini & Zainuddin, 2025; Atika et al., 2024). This suggests that the analytical challenge has gradually shifted from asking whether communities participate to asking how communities acquire the capacity to shape tourism development.

The development of CBT scholarship reflects this shift. Early approaches emphasized the importance of local ownership, participation, and community benefits as alternatives to externally controlled tourism development (Aminulloh et al., 2026; Sada et al., 2026; Sulistiani

& Syarifuddin, 2024). Subsequent research expanded the discussion by examining participation, stakeholder collaboration, social capital, empowerment, and governance as conditions for more sustainable forms of tourism (Macias et al., 2023; Markhamah et al., 2024; Mony et al., 2023). Community-based tourism is consequently no longer understood simply as tourism located in a community, but as a development process in which local actors should have meaningful roles in determining how tourism resources are used and how benefits and responsibilities are distributed. (Hermawan et al., 2023), for instance, cautioned that CBT can reproduce conventional tourism relationships when participation is reduced to an instrumental mechanism for improving destination performance. The implication is important: the existence of local participation does not necessarily indicate that tourism development is genuinely community based.

A second strand of literature has increasingly connected CBT with sustainability, resilience, and local development. Sustainable tourism scholarship has emphasized that tourism development involves unavoidable tensions between economic growth, environmental protection, social well-being, and cultural continuity (Ali et al., 2026; Jeaheng et al., 2026). The integrated community-based tourism perspective similarly argues that economic benefits cannot be separated from questions of justice, equity, governance, and the protection of local resources (Fikri et al., 2023; Pratama & Jannah, 2024). Governance becomes particularly important because sustainable tourism depends on collective decisions involving governments, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. (Dinh, 2022) argue that effective tourism governance provides the institutional basis through which collective action can address sustainability challenges, (Sastrawan et al., 2022) shows that sustainable tourism is often constrained not by the absence of policy ideas but by difficulties in institutional learning, coordination, and implementation. In environmental contexts, collaborative networks and organizational capacity have likewise been identified as important for translating sustainability principles into practice (Tarifu et al., 2022). These perspectives suggest that community-based tourism should be understood as a social and institutional process rather than simply an economic model.

A third body of literature has highlighted the importance of social capital, local knowledge, and collective action in tourism development. Communities do not enter tourism development as collections of isolated individuals; they are embedded in relationships of trust, reciprocity, shared norms, and local institutions. Social capital can facilitate cooperation, collective problem-solving, and access to wider networks, thereby influencing the capacity of communities to manage tourism resources and respond to external actors (Sulaiman et al., 2022; Zuska & Zulkifli, 2025). In this sense, local tourism development may emerge from everyday social relations as much as from formal tourism programs. This is particularly relevant in coastal and island communities, where collective practices, customary values, and informal networks can influence how environmental resources are maintained and how economic activities are organized. Recent research in Indonesia continues to demonstrate that community-based tourism can depend strongly on local social relations,

cultural values, and community organization rather than solely on formal tourism institutions (van Onselen et al., 2025). Such findings strengthen the argument that understanding tourism development requires attention to the social mechanisms through which local actors mobilize resources and coordinate action.

A fourth and increasingly important strand concerns young people. Youth have traditionally appeared in tourism research as beneficiaries, workers, consumers, or a demographic category requiring employment opportunities. Increasingly, however, young people are being recognized as actors capable of initiating social innovation, building networks, experimenting with new livelihood strategies, and influencing local environmental governance. This development is especially visible in small-island and coastal settings. Research from Pahawang Island, Indonesia, for example, demonstrates how young islanders mobilized socio-environmental concerns to protect coastal environments, develop livelihood opportunities, and establish new forms of community-based ecotourism governance. Rather than waiting for government intervention, youth initiatives contributed to environmental conservation, livelihood creation, network building, and the emergence of new institutional arrangements (Antara et al., 2026). The significance of this finding extends beyond the particular island studied because it demonstrates that youth action can become a mechanism through which community capacity and tourism governance are reshaped.

Evidence from other Indonesian coastal destinations points in a similar direction. Research at Liang Beach in Maluku has shown that youth and women can act as change agents in community-based ecotourism by combining environmental advocacy with cultural preservation and grassroots social mobilization (Utami et al., 2025). At Sopapei, Ambon, community participation has also been identified as an important foundation for developing community-based tourism, although the destination continues to face challenges associated with management, coordination, and relationships among local tourism actors (Ikhbar et al., 2026). More recently, research at Wane Beach in Bima has documented how youth-led collective action contributed to transforming a poorly managed coastal area into an emerging tourism destination, with social capital and digital storytelling becoming part of the destination revitalization process (Rozaki et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies suggest that youth participation in coastal tourism is not an isolated phenomenon. Rather, young people can occupy strategic positions at the intersection of environmental action, entrepreneurship, community organization, communication, and destination development.

Nevertheless, the growing recognition of youth participation also exposes an unresolved conceptual issue. Existing research provides valuable evidence that young people can participate in conservation, entrepreneurship, digital promotion, and community tourism, but these dimensions are often examined separately. Research on CBT has extensively discussed participation, empowerment, social capital, governance, sustainability, and livelihood diversification, while youth studies have increasingly examined agency and social innovation. What remains less developed is an explanation of how youth agency is translated into a broader process of community-based tourism development. The issue is

therefore not simply whether young people are active, but how their initiatives move from individual or group action into collective practices that produce economic opportunities, environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, and more locally grounded tourism governance. This question becomes particularly significant in Eastern Indonesia, where small-island and coastal communities have received considerably less sustained attention in the international CBT literature than more established tourism regions. A recent bibliometric and systematic review of CBT research covering 1995-2025 identified 847 publications and found both theoretical fragmentation and geographical imbalance in the field, reinforcing the need for more context-sensitive research from underrepresented regions (Nurhayati et al., 2023).

The Indonesian context makes this issue even more compelling. A recent systematic review of sustainable tourism research in Indonesia shows that community participation is widely associated with economic empowerment, environmental stewardship, and social sustainability, but also reveals persistent barriers to meaningful participation and uneven outcomes across different community settings (Van Tuyen et al., 2023). Similarly, recent reviews of CBT emphasize that participation may remain symbolic when communities lack decision-making authority, institutional support, resources, or mechanisms for benefit sharing (Hasbiyadi et al., 2025). Thus, the effectiveness of CBT cannot be explained solely by the presence of local participation. It depends on whether local actors have the capacity and institutional space to initiate action, mobilize others, negotiate with government and tourism stakeholders, and sustain practices over time.

This concern is particularly relevant to Natsepa Beach because the destination represents a setting where tourism resources, local economic activity, environmental concerns, social relations, and public-sector involvement intersect. The available literature establishes Natsepa's tourism potential, while studies from nearby coastal destinations such as Sopapei demonstrate the relevance of community participation to tourism development in Ambon. Research from Liang, Pahawang, and Wane Beach further indicates that youth can act as important agents in environmental action, community tourism, and destination revitalization. Yet these bodies of evidence have not been brought together to explain the mechanism through which youth leadership becomes a broader process of community-based tourism development in Natsepa. The issue is therefore not to claim that previous studies have ignored youth or community participation, but to move the analytical focus one step further: from participation toward agency, from agency toward collective action, and from collective action toward the interconnected economic, environmental, cultural, and governance processes that sustain community-based tourism.

Against this background, this study conceptualizes youth not simply as participants in tourism activities but as potential actors through whom local tourism development is initiated, negotiated, and reproduced. The analytical emphasis is placed on the relationship between youth agency and collective action, and on how this relationship may generate social innovation, local entrepreneurship, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation within a community-based tourism setting. Such an approach allows tourism development to

be examined as a social process embedded in local institutions and relationships rather than as a destination management problem alone. At the same time, it recognizes that youth agency does not operate in a vacuum. Its capacity to produce sustained outcomes is shaped by training and skills, infrastructure, access to resources, community norms, institutional arrangements, stakeholder coordination, and government support. In other words, youth initiative may be an important starting point for local tourism transformation, but its transformative potential depends on the institutional and social conditions within which that initiative operates.

The present study therefore seeks to analyze how youth-led initiatives contribute to community-based tourism development at Natsepa Beach, Maluku, Indonesia, and through what social, economic, environmental, cultural, and governance mechanisms youth participation is transformed into local tourism development. More specifically, the study examines how young people initiate and coordinate tourism-related activities, how their involvement creates local economic and entrepreneurial opportunities, how they contribute to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation, and how their interactions with communities, government, and other tourism actors shape local governance. By bringing these dimensions together, the study aims to develop a context-sensitive explanation of youth-led community-based tourism in a coastal and island setting. The contribution lies not in treating youth involvement as an additional category of participation, but in understanding youth agency as part of the mechanism through which community capacity is converted into collective action and, ultimately, into locally grounded tourism development. In this way, the study positions Natsepa Beach not merely as another coastal tourism destination, but as a valuable setting for examining how young people can become producers of local development within the complex social and institutional realities of an island community.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine how youth-led initiatives contribute to community-based tourism development at Natsepa Beach. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the phenomenon under investigation concerns social practices, experiences, interactions, and meanings that cannot be adequately captured through numerical measurements alone. The study sought to understand how young people participate in tourism activities, how their involvement is connected with local economic activities, environmental stewardship, cultural practices, and relationships with other community and governmental actors. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring social phenomena in their natural settings and for allowing participants to describe their experiences and perspectives in their own terms (Amelia et al., 2024; Muhammad Kurnia Ramadhan, Harapan Tua Ricky Fredy Simanjuntak, 2023). The descriptive orientation was adopted to enable the researchers to present the realities of youth involvement in tourism as they occur within the everyday context of the community, rather than testing predetermined causal relationships. The research was conducted at

Natsepa Beach, located in Negeri Suli, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku Province, Indonesia. The site was purposively selected because Natsepa is an established coastal tourism destination where tourism activities are closely intertwined with local livelihoods, community relations, environmental conditions, and public-sector involvement. Previous studies have documented the tourism potential of Natsepa, but the ways in which local actors, particularly young people, contribute to organizing and sustaining tourism activities remain less understood. The location therefore provides a relevant empirical setting for examining youth agency within community-based tourism.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby participants were deliberately chosen because of their knowledge, experience, position, or direct involvement in tourism-related activities at Natsepa Beach. Ten key informants participated in the study. They represented several interconnected groups, namely the Head of Negeri Suli, a traditional leader, representatives of young men and women, local entrepreneurs or traders, and representatives of the Tourism Office involved in tourism management. These informants were selected because each occupies a different position within the local tourism system and could therefore provide complementary perspectives on youth participation and community-based tourism development. Local government representatives were included to understand institutional responsibilities and forms of governmental support; traditional and community actors were included to capture local norms, collective practices, and cultural considerations; youth representatives were included because they were directly involved in tourism-related initiatives and activities; while entrepreneurs and traders provided perspectives on the economic consequences of tourism and the livelihood opportunities generated around the destination. The inclusion of informants from different stakeholder groups also enabled the study to examine the phenomenon beyond the perspective of youth alone and to understand how youth initiatives are perceived, supported, negotiated, or constrained by other actors.

Data were collected primarily through in-depth semi-structured interviews and direct observation. Semi-structured interviews were used because they provided sufficient structure to ensure that all relevant themes were addressed while allowing participants to explain their experiences and raise issues that emerged naturally during the conversation. The interviews explored participants' experiences of youth involvement, forms of youth initiative and leadership, collective activities, local entrepreneurship, environmental practices, cultural values, relationships with the community and government, perceived benefits, and challenges affecting tourism development. Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner to encourage participants to articulate their experiences openly and to allow the researchers to pursue relevant statements through follow-up questions. Direct observation was undertaken at the coastal tourism area to complement interview accounts with observations of actual practices and interactions. Attention was given to tourism-related activities, youth involvement, visitor services, cleanliness and environmental practices, economic activities, interactions among local actors, and the general organization of the tourism space. Observation was important because some forms of participation and collective

action are embedded in routine activities and may not be fully expressed through verbal accounts alone. Secondary data were also examined, including the monograph of Negeri Suli and relevant previous studies, to provide contextual information and support interpretation of the primary data.

Data validity was strengthened through methodological triangulation. Information obtained from interviews was compared with observations of activities and with relevant documentary evidence to identify consistencies, differences, and contextual explanations. Triangulation was also supported by comparing perspectives across different categories of informants, particularly between youth, community leaders, local government, and tourism-related economic actors. This process helped reduce dependence on a single perspective and strengthened the credibility of the findings, as recommended in qualitative research (Amelia et al., 2024). Data analysis followed an interactive process involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following the analytical logic proposed by (Hasbiyadi et al., 2025). Interview and observation data were first organized and reduced by identifying information relevant to youth initiatives, collective action, economic activities, environmental stewardship, cultural practices, governance, and constraints. The reduced data were then presented narratively to identify recurring patterns and relationships among themes. Finally, conclusions were developed by interpreting these patterns in relation to the research questions and the broader concept of community-based tourism. The analysis was conducted iteratively, meaning that interpretation and comparison continued throughout the research process rather than being treated as a separate activity only after all data had been collected. This approach allowed the study to move beyond simply describing youth participation and to explain how youth initiatives were connected with broader processes of community-based tourism development at Natsepa Beach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Youth Agency as the Foundation of Community-Based Tourism Development

The findings indicate that young people in Natsepa occupy a position that extends beyond being participants in tourism activities. Their involvement reflects an emerging form of youth agency through which they identify local needs, initiate practical responses, organize other young people, and contribute to the functioning of the tourism destination. Their roles in maintaining cleanliness, supporting visitor services, assisting with security and parking, and engaging in tourism-related economic activities demonstrate that youth have become local tourism actors. This distinction is important because participation becomes more meaningful when individuals are able to influence activities rather than merely attend or perform assigned tasks. The finding is consistent with the participation-empowerment perspective, which argues that community participation does not automatically produce empowerment; rather, participation and empowerment develop through continuous interaction and increasing capacity to act (Van Tuyen et al., 2023). In the Natsepa context, youth agency can therefore be understood as the initial mechanism through which local tourism initiatives

emerge.

The significance of youth agency becomes clearer when their involvement is viewed as an ongoing process rather than as a collection of individual contributions. Young people do not simply respond to tourism activities that have already been established; through their everyday presence, they help identify practical problems and determine how those problems can be addressed. Cleanliness, visitor assistance, parking arrangements, security, and tourism-related economic activities are not isolated responsibilities. They represent different points through which young people become connected to the everyday operation of the destination. Their involvement allows them to acquire practical knowledge about visitors, the physical environment, local tourism needs, and the expectations of other community members. Agency is consequently developed through practice: young people learn by doing, responding, coordinating, and adjusting their actions to changing conditions at the destination.

This practical dimension is important because the ability to act is closely connected to opportunities for learning and responsibility. Through repeated involvement, young people become familiar with the routines and challenges of tourism management and gradually occupy more visible positions within the local tourism environment. Their participation creates opportunities to develop organizational skills, communication capacities, problem-solving abilities, and forms of informal leadership. These capacities may not emerge through formal training alone because much of the learning takes place through direct engagement with visitors, fellow youth, community members, and tourism-related activities. The findings therefore suggest that youth agency is simultaneously an outcome and a foundation of participation: young people develop their capacity to act through participation, while their growing capacity enables them to contribute more actively to tourism development.

The findings also indicate that youth agency has a collective dimension. Individual initiative becomes more consequential when it is connected to relationships with other young people and with the wider community. Activities such as maintaining cleanliness, assisting visitors, supporting security, managing parking, and participating in tourism-related economic activities require forms of coordination, even when they are not organized through highly formal institutional structures. Young people must communicate, divide responsibilities, respond to situations, and maintain cooperation in the course of everyday tourism activities. In this sense, youth participation creates a practical space for collective learning. The capacity of young people to act collectively is not necessarily produced through formal organizational membership; it can emerge through shared responsibilities and repeated interaction around common local concerns.

This movement from individual agency toward collective action is particularly important for community-based tourism. A tourism destination cannot be sustained only through the efforts of isolated individuals because visitor experiences, environmental conditions, security, and economic activities are interconnected. When young people coordinate their contributions, their individual capacities can become a collective resource

for the destination. Cleanliness, for example, is not only an environmental concern but also part of the visitor experience and the attractiveness of the destination. Similarly, visitor assistance and security contribute to the social environment in which tourism takes place. Youth involvement therefore links everyday community practices with the broader functioning of tourism. Their agency becomes meaningful not simply because young people are active, but because their activities contribute to conditions that allow the destination to function.

At the same time, the findings suggest that youth agency should not be interpreted as replacing other community actors. Rather, young people operate within an existing social environment in which families, community members, tourism actors, and local institutions also have roles. Their contribution emerges through interaction with these actors and through the opportunities available within the destination. This relational character is important because agency is not exercised in isolation. Young people can initiate activities, but the sustainability of those initiatives depends partly on whether their participation is recognized, supported, and connected to broader community processes. Community-based tourism therefore requires a social environment in which young people's capacities can be expressed and translated into meaningful collective contributions.

The economic dimension of youth participation further demonstrates the multidimensional character of their agency. Engagement in tourism-related economic activities provides young people with opportunities to connect community participation with livelihood strategies. Tourism is therefore not experienced only as a social or environmental activity but also as a potential economic space. Through involvement in tourism, young people can identify opportunities to generate income while remaining connected to the development of their local destination. This does not mean that all youth participation is economically motivated. Rather, social responsibility, practical involvement, and economic opportunity can coexist within the same tourism environment. The combination is significant because it creates stronger incentives for young people to remain engaged with the destination while simultaneously developing their own capacities.

The findings ultimately position youth agency as an important foundation for community-based tourism because it connects participation with the capacity to initiate, coordinate, and sustain local action. Young people become more than an available labour force or a demographic group included in tourism programs; they become actors who contribute to the social organization of the destination. Their agency develops through repeated practical engagement, while collective participation transforms individual capacities into shared resources. In Natsepa, this process illustrates how community-based tourism can emerge through everyday actions that are locally initiated and socially embedded. The central implication is that youth participation becomes developmentally significant when young people are able to move from being recipients or performers of tourism activities toward becoming actors who identify needs, mobilize responses, cooperate with others, and contribute to the continuing functioning of the destination.

From Youth Agency to Collective Action: Organizing Community Participation

Youth initiatives become more significant when individual actions develop into collective practices involving the wider community. The analysis shows that activities related to beach management, visitor services, environmental care, and tourism-related economic activities are connected to relationships among young people, residents, traders, community leaders, tourism managers, and the Negeri Suli government. Such relationships create opportunities for coordination and shared responsibility. Consequently, community participation at Natsepa should not be understood simply as attendance or involvement in tourism activities, but as the capacity to mobilize people and resources around shared concerns. This interpretation corresponds with (Nurhayati et al., 2023) community-based tourism model, which emphasizes participation, collaboration, social capital, and power relations as important elements of community-based tourism. The transition from youth agency to collective action therefore represents an important mechanism through which community ownership of tourism can gradually be strengthened.

The findings further indicate that collective participation develops through practical forms of coordination rather than through formal organization alone. Young people become connected with residents, traders, tourism managers, community leaders, and government actors through activities that require shared attention to the functioning of Natsepa as a tourism destination. Beach management, environmental care, visitor assistance, security, and economic activities create different points of interaction through which responsibilities can be negotiated and distributed. These interactions allow individual initiatives to become connected to broader community practices. In this process, participation becomes a relational activity in which actors recognize that maintaining the destination cannot be achieved through the effort of one group alone.

An important aspect of this process is the circulation of information and practical knowledge. Young people who are directly involved in tourism activities encounter visitors and observe everyday conditions at the destination, while residents, traders, managers, and government actors possess different forms of local knowledge and authority. When these perspectives come together, community participation becomes a mechanism for sharing information about problems, needs, and possible responses. Collective action therefore does not necessarily begin with a formally designed program. It can emerge from repeated interaction around practical concerns that are visible in everyday tourism activities. The destination itself becomes an arena where different actors learn about one another's capacities and develop ways of working together.

The transition toward collective action also changes the meaning of responsibility. When tourism-related activities are treated as the responsibility of a particular institution or a limited group of actors, other community members may remain primarily as users or beneficiaries of the destination. In contrast, when young people, residents, traders, and other local actors participate in maintaining and supporting tourism activities, responsibility becomes more distributed. This does not mean that all actors have identical roles or levels of

authority. Rather, collective participation allows different actors to contribute according to their position, knowledge, resources, and capacity. Such differentiation is important because community-based tourism depends not on uniform participation but on the ability to connect different forms of contribution toward shared local objectives.

The findings also suggest that collective action strengthens the social foundations of community ownership. When people contribute to activities that affect the condition and functioning of Natsepa, tourism becomes connected to everyday community life rather than being perceived solely as an external economic activity. Young people's involvement can encourage wider participation because their activities create visible examples of local engagement, while relationships with residents, traders, community leaders, managers, and government provide channels through which initiatives can be supported and coordinated. Community ownership consequently develops gradually through participation, recognition, and shared responsibility rather than through formal declaration alone.

Thus, the movement from youth agency to collective action represents a process through which individual capacities become embedded in broader social relationships. Youth agency provides an initial source of initiative, but collective action gives those initiatives continuity and wider social relevance. At Natsepa, community participation is therefore produced through the coordination of people, responsibilities, knowledge, and resources around the shared concern of sustaining the tourism destination. This process strengthens the possibility that tourism development can remain socially embedded, allowing local actors not only to participate in tourism but also to contribute to how the destination is maintained, organized, and experienced by the wider community.

Youth-Led Social Innovation and Local Entrepreneurship

The economic dimension of youth involvement is reflected in their ability to recognize opportunities created by tourism and translate locally available resources into small-scale economic activities. Tourism-related trading, food services, parking, visitor assistance, and other supporting activities provide spaces through which young people can generate income while remaining connected to the local tourism economy. From this perspective, entrepreneurship is not limited to commercial activity; it also involves recognizing opportunities, organizing available resources, and creating economic value from local assets. Youth initiatives can consequently be interpreted as grassroots social innovation because they combine local knowledge, social relationships, and available resources to address economic and tourism needs. A recent study of Pahawang Island similarly found that youth initiatives connected livelihood creation, environmental concerns, social innovation, and community-based ecotourism, demonstrating the relevance of youth agency in small-island tourism contexts (Rozaki et al., 2025).

This form of entrepreneurship is particularly important in a community-based tourism setting because economic initiative is closely connected to locally available resources and social relationships. Young people do not necessarily require large-scale investment or formal business structures to participate in the tourism economy. Instead, entrepreneurship may

develop through the ability to recognize existing opportunities, mobilize available resources, and provide services that respond to visitor needs. Such processes demonstrate that local entrepreneurship can emerge from everyday community practices rather than only from formally established enterprises. The economic activities undertaken by youth are therefore embedded within the social environment of Natsepa, where tourism, community interaction, and livelihood opportunities intersect. In this sense, entrepreneurship becomes part of a broader process through which young people learn to recognize the economic potential of their surroundings and translate that potential into practical action.

The findings also suggest that youth entrepreneurship should not be separated from the concept of social innovation. Social innovation in this context does not necessarily refer to sophisticated technological products or entirely new business models. Rather, it can be understood as the capacity to develop practical responses to locally experienced needs by combining existing resources, knowledge, relationships, and initiative in new or more productive ways. Youth involvement in tourism illustrates this process because economic activities are connected to the functioning of the destination itself. Young people contribute to visitor experiences while simultaneously creating opportunities for their own economic participation. Their initiatives consequently have a dual dimension: they generate individual or household-level economic benefits while also supporting activities that enable tourism to function more effectively at the community level.

The relationship between entrepreneurship and community-based tourism is also significant because it creates a connection between economic participation and local ownership. When young people are able to obtain livelihood opportunities from activities taking place within their own community, tourism becomes more directly connected to local economic interests. This can strengthen the perception that tourism is not simply an external activity involving visitors and tourism managers, but a space in which residents can participate and derive tangible benefits. Such participation may also encourage young people to remain attentive to the quality and continuity of the destination because their economic activities are connected to the broader tourism environment. Entrepreneurship, therefore, becomes intertwined with the sustainability of local tourism rather than functioning as an isolated commercial pursuit.

At the same time, the economic contribution of youth should not be interpreted solely through the amount of income generated. Its broader significance lies in the capacities developed through participation. Engaging in tourism-related economic activities requires young people to communicate with visitors, understand demand, manage resources, coordinate with others, respond to changing situations, and make practical decisions. These experiences can strengthen forms of experiential learning that are difficult to obtain through formal education alone. Youth entrepreneurship can consequently function as a process of capacity development, through which young people acquire confidence, practical knowledge, social connections, and an understanding of how local economic activities operate. This dimension reinforces the earlier argument that youth agency is not simply a form of

participation but a process through which young people develop the capacity to act within their community.

The connection between youth entrepreneurship and social innovation is particularly relevant in small-island tourism contexts, where economic opportunities may be shaped by limited resources, geographic conditions, and dependence on locally available assets. A recent study of Pahawang Island similarly demonstrates how youth initiatives can connect livelihood creation, environmental concerns, social innovation, and community-based ecotourism, highlighting the wider relevance of youth agency in island tourism contexts (Rozaki et al., 2025). The Natsepa case reflects a related pattern in which youth economic participation emerges from the interaction between tourism opportunities, local resources, and community relationships. What is important, therefore, is not simply that young people participate in tourism-related economic activities, but that they become capable of recognizing possibilities within their immediate environment and organizing resources to respond to them.

Taken together, these findings position youth-led entrepreneurship as an important bridge between individual agency and broader community-based tourism development. Youth economic initiatives provide practical opportunities for generating livelihoods, but they also contribute to the social and organizational foundations through which tourism activities are sustained. When local resources are connected with youth initiative, social relationships, and tourism demand, economic participation can become a form of grassroots innovation. The significance of youth entrepreneurship at Natsepa consequently lies in its capacity to connect livelihood creation with community participation, demonstrating that young people can contribute not only as workers or beneficiaries but also as local actors who help shape the economic life of the tourism destination.

Environmental Stewardship as a Community-Based Tourism Practice

Environmental stewardship represents another important dimension of youth-led tourism development in Natsepa. Youth involvement in maintaining beach cleanliness and supporting collective environmental activities indicates that natural resources are not perceived merely as tourism commodities but as community assets requiring continuous care. This is particularly significant for a coastal destination whose attractiveness depends directly on environmental quality. Environmental action therefore creates a connection between collective youth participation, destination quality, and tourism sustainability. Evidence from Pahawang further demonstrates that youth-led environmental initiatives can contribute to sustaining community-based ecotourism while strengthening local conservation capacity and governance arrangements (Nurhayati et al., 2023).

The findings further show that environmental stewardship at Natsepa is closely connected to the everyday responsibilities assumed by young people within the tourism space. Beach cleanliness, for example, is not treated as an isolated environmental activity but as part of maintaining the overall condition of the destination. Young people become involved in responding to visible environmental problems and in supporting activities that keep the

coastal area usable and attractive for both residents and visitors. Through these practices, environmental responsibility becomes embedded in the ordinary functioning of tourism. The significance of this involvement lies in the fact that environmental care is carried out within the same social space where tourism, recreation, economic activities, and community interaction take place. Consequently, young people's environmental participation connects ecological concerns with the practical needs of the destination.

This connection also illustrates how environmental stewardship can become a form of collective learning. Young people learn to recognize the relationship between environmental conditions and the continuity of tourism through direct experience. When the beach is clean and properly maintained, the tourism environment becomes more comfortable for visitors and more beneficial for local economic activities. Conversely, environmental deterioration can affect the attractiveness and usability of the destination. Such experiences allow young people to understand sustainability not as an abstract principle but as something directly connected to their everyday surroundings. Environmental action therefore becomes a practical process through which youth develop awareness of the consequences of tourism activities and the importance of maintaining the resources on which those activities depend.

The environmental dimension also strengthens the collective character of youth participation. Maintaining a coastal tourism destination cannot be accomplished through the effort of one individual. It requires coordination, shared awareness, and a willingness to contribute to activities whose benefits are experienced collectively. Youth involvement in environmental activities consequently creates opportunities for cooperation among young people and other community members. Through shared environmental responsibilities, the beach becomes understood as a common space rather than simply a location where tourism businesses operate. This perception is important for community-based tourism because it places the responsibility for maintaining tourism resources within the wider community rather than concentrating it exclusively in formal tourism institutions.

At the same time, environmental stewardship reinforces the connection between youth agency and community ownership. Young people demonstrate their capacity to contribute to the destination not only through economic activities or visitor services but also through actions that protect the conditions necessary for tourism to continue. Their involvement provides a visible expression of responsibility toward the local environment and demonstrates that tourism development involves both benefits and obligations. The ability to participate in environmental care allows young people to become more closely connected with the physical space of Natsepa and with the community that depends upon it.

Importantly, environmental stewardship at Natsepa should not be understood as a separate component from other forms of youth-led tourism development. It interacts with local entrepreneurship, community participation, cultural values, and tourism governance. A clean and well-maintained environment supports visitor activities and local businesses, while collective environmental practices strengthen cooperation among community actors. In this sense, environmental care contributes to the broader social organization of tourism. Youth

participation in maintaining the environment therefore extends the meaning of tourism development beyond economic activity toward a more integrated form of community responsibility.

Overall, the findings indicate that environmental stewardship represents one of the ways through which youth agency becomes translated into sustained community-based tourism practices. Young people contribute by caring for the physical resources that support tourism while simultaneously strengthening collective responsibility toward the destination. Their environmental involvement demonstrates that the sustainability of Natsepa depends not only on the attractiveness of its coastal resources but also on the willingness of local actors to continuously maintain and protect them. Environmental stewardship thus becomes part of the broader process through which youth participation is transformed into collective action and contributes to the long-term social and ecological foundation of community-based tourism at Natsepa.

Cultural Preservation and Community Values in Youth-Led Tourism

The findings also suggest that youth participation cannot be separated from the social and cultural values of the community. Practices of mutual assistance, community cooperation, respect for traditional leaders, and interaction among residents provide an important social foundation for tourism development. In this process, young people can function as cultural intermediaries who connect established community values with contemporary tourism practices. Rather than assuming that tourism modernization necessarily weakens local identity, the Natsepa case indicates that tourism can provide a space in which social values and community identity are reproduced through collective activities. Thus, cultural preservation is not an additional component of CBT but part of the social process through which community ownership of tourism is maintained.

The findings further indicate that the cultural dimension of youth participation is reflected in the ways young people remain connected to the social relationships and values that structure community life. Mutual assistance, cooperation, respect for traditional leaders, and everyday interaction among residents provide a social environment in which tourism activities are understood as part of community life rather than as an activity operating separately from it. Within this context, young people do not simply participate in tourism as individuals seeking economic opportunities. Their involvement is also shaped by their position within the wider community and by their relationships with other residents. This makes youth participation an important mechanism through which existing social values can continue to operate within a changing tourism environment.

The role of young people as cultural intermediaries is particularly important in this process. As the group that is more directly exposed to contemporary forms of tourism, young people occupy a position between established community practices and emerging forms of tourism activity. They can introduce new ways of organizing activities and interacting with visitors while remaining connected to values learned through community relationships. This intermediary role does not necessarily require young people to reproduce cultural practices

in exactly the same form as previous generations. Instead, it allows community values to be carried into new social and economic settings. In this sense, cultural continuity can occur through adaptation, as young people negotiate between the expectations of contemporary tourism and the social principles that remain important within the community.

The findings also show that community values contribute to the way tourism participation is organized. Cooperation and mutual assistance encourage young people to view tourism-related activities as collective responsibilities rather than solely individual opportunities. This orientation is important because community-based tourism depends on relationships among local actors and on their willingness to contribute beyond their immediate personal interests. When young people participate within a social environment characterized by cooperation, their tourism activities become connected to broader patterns of community interaction. Tourism therefore becomes another arena in which existing forms of social relations can be practiced and strengthened.

Respect for traditional leaders also illustrates the continuing relevance of established community structures in youth-led tourism development. Youth participation does not necessarily mean replacing existing forms of authority with entirely new arrangements. Instead, young people can contribute to tourism while remaining connected to the social structures through which community decisions and relationships are maintained. This relationship creates space for interaction between generations, allowing younger community members to contribute new ideas while recognizing the experience and social position of established community actors. Such interaction can help reduce the distance between youth initiatives and broader community expectations.

At the same time, the findings suggest that cultural preservation should not be understood only in terms of protecting cultural expressions from change. In the context of Natsepa, preservation is also visible in the continuation of values that shape how people cooperate, interact, and understand their responsibilities toward one another. These values provide a social foundation for tourism development because they influence how collective activities are organized and how community members relate to tourism as a shared concern. Cultural identity is therefore reproduced not only through explicit cultural activities but also through everyday forms of participation and social interaction.

This perspective further demonstrates that youth-led tourism development involves more than the creation of economic opportunities. Young people's participation can strengthen their connection with the community while simultaneously allowing community values to remain relevant within contemporary tourism practices. Tourism becomes a social space where younger and older generations can interact, where cooperation can be maintained, and where community identity can be negotiated through everyday activities. The continuation of these relationships contributes to a sense of shared ownership over tourism development.

Overall, cultural preservation at Natsepa emerges as an ongoing social process rather than a separate tourism objective. Youth participation helps connect established community

values with changing forms of tourism while maintaining the importance of cooperation, mutual assistance, respect, and social interaction. Through this process, young people contribute not only to the development of tourism activities but also to the reproduction of the social relationships that make community-based tourism possible. Cultural values consequently function as an important foundation for community ownership, ensuring that tourism development remains connected to the community in which it takes place.

Youth Participation and Community-Based Tourism Governance

The relationship between youth, the community, tourism actors, and government reveals an important governance dimension. Youth participation becomes more transformative when young people have opportunities to communicate their needs, contribute ideas, coordinate activities, and interact with institutional actors. However, participation should be distinguished from decision-making authority. If youth are primarily involved in operational activities while having limited influence over planning and management, their participation remains largely functional. Conversely, stronger interaction among youth, community leaders, the Negeri government, tourism managers, and other stakeholders creates the possibility of more participatory tourism governance. This finding reinforces the argument that effective CBT requires participation in planning and management rather than participation merely as implementation (Antara et al., 2026).

The findings further demonstrate that youth participation in Natsepa is closely connected to the way tourism development is coordinated among different community and institutional actors. Young people do not operate independently from the wider community. Their activities take place within a network of relationships involving community leaders, the Negeri government, tourism managers, local actors, and other stakeholders. These relationships shape the extent to which youth can contribute to tourism development and influence how their initiatives are recognized within broader community processes. Governance, therefore, becomes an important dimension for understanding whether youth participation can develop beyond involvement in individual activities toward a more sustained contribution to community-based tourism.

Communication represents one of the initial mechanisms through which this participation can become meaningful. Opportunities for young people to express their needs, share ideas, and communicate concerns allow them to become visible as community actors rather than simply as participants who carry out tasks assigned by others. Communication also creates opportunities for different stakeholders to understand the perspectives of young people and to identify areas where youth initiatives can contribute to tourism development. In this context, communication is not merely an exchange of information but part of the process through which relationships between youth and institutional actors are established and maintained.

Coordination is equally important because youth-led activities often require interaction with actors beyond the youth group itself. Tourism development involves shared spaces, community resources, local economic interests, and institutional responsibilities.

Young people's initiatives therefore need to be connected with broader community arrangements if they are to be sustained. Coordination with community leaders and the Negeri government, for example, can provide opportunities to align youth activities with community priorities. Interaction with tourism managers and other stakeholders can also help connect youth initiatives with the practical needs of tourism development. Through these relationships, youth participation becomes embedded within the wider organization of community-based tourism.

At the same time, the findings highlight an important distinction between participation and decision-making authority. Being present in tourism activities or contributing to their implementation does not automatically mean that young people have influence over decisions concerning planning, management, or future development. Youth may be actively involved in operational activities while having limited opportunities to determine priorities or shape institutional decisions. In such circumstances, participation can remain largely functional because young people contribute labor, ideas, or implementation without having a meaningful role in determining the direction of tourism development.

A more participatory form of governance emerges when opportunities for youth involvement extend into discussion, planning, and coordination. When young people can communicate their perspectives and participate in processes where decisions are considered, their position within tourism governance becomes more substantial. This does not imply that youth should replace established community authorities or institutional actors. Rather, it suggests the importance of creating spaces in which youth perspectives can interact with existing forms of authority and community decision-making. Such interaction can strengthen relationships between generations and institutions while allowing tourism planning to incorporate experiences and concerns emerging from younger community members.

The relationship between youth participation and governance is also connected to the sustainability of youth-led initiatives. Activities that depend entirely on individual enthusiasm may become difficult to maintain when circumstances change. Institutional recognition, coordination, and communication can provide a broader social and organizational foundation for continuing youth involvement. When young people perceive that their contributions are acknowledged within community and institutional processes, participation can become more consistent and connected to longer-term tourism development. Governance thus influences not only what young people can do but also whether their initiatives can become part of the continuing organization of tourism in Natsepa.

The findings consequently position youth as potential partners in community-based tourism governance rather than simply as beneficiaries or implementers. Their transformative contribution depends on the extent to which institutional relationships create opportunities for communication, coordination, and meaningful involvement. The interaction between youth, community leaders, the Negeri government, tourism actors, and other stakeholders can create a governance environment in which youth initiatives are connected to wider community priorities. In this sense, participatory governance provides the

institutional space through which youth agency can be translated into more sustained forms of community-based tourism development.

Overall, youth participation becomes more meaningful when it moves from doing to contributing, from contributing to communicating, and from communicating to having a recognized role in collective planning and management. The Natsepa case therefore illustrates that the transformative potential of youth-led tourism is shaped not only by the willingness and capacity of young people themselves but also by the governance arrangements surrounding their participation. Strengthening these relationships can create opportunities for youth initiatives to become integrated into community decision-making while maintaining the collective values and institutional structures that support community-based tourism.

Conditions Shaping the Transformative Capacity of Youth Initiatives

The analysis further demonstrates that youth agency alone is insufficient to guarantee sustained tourism development. Its transformative capacity depends on enabling conditions, particularly access to training, adequate infrastructure, institutional support, coordination, and sustained government engagement. Training can strengthen tourism, entrepreneurship, hospitality, digital promotion, and environmental management capabilities, while infrastructure and institutional resources provide the practical conditions required for initiatives to continue. Coordination is equally important because youth initiatives operate within relationships involving government, community, tourism managers, and business actors. Thus, the more appropriate analytical relationship is not youth agency equals transformation, but youth agency combined with enabling conditions produces sustained collective action and more durable CBT outcomes. Recent research on Indonesian island tourism similarly demonstrates that youth initiatives can stimulate new networks and governance arrangements when supported by broader community and institutional relationships (Antara et al., 2026).

The findings further show that the capacity of youth initiatives to produce lasting changes is shaped by the environment in which those initiatives operate. Young people may demonstrate enthusiasm, creativity, and willingness to contribute, but these qualities do not automatically translate into sustained tourism development. Their initiatives require social, institutional, and material conditions that allow participation to move beyond short-term activities. In the context of Natsepa, this means that youth agency should be understood as a starting point whose outcomes are influenced by the availability of resources, relationships, knowledge, and institutional opportunities.

Training represents one of the important conditions supporting this process. Young people involved in tourism may have strong familiarity with the local environment and community, but tourism development also requires particular knowledge and skills. Training can provide opportunities to strengthen their understanding of tourism management, entrepreneurship, hospitality, digital promotion, and environmental management. These capabilities can help young people translate their existing knowledge of the community into

activities that are more organized and responsive to the demands of tourism. Training therefore does not replace local knowledge or youth initiative. Rather, it can strengthen their ability to use existing capacities in ways that support longer-term community-based tourism development.

Infrastructure provides another important foundation. Youth-led initiatives require practical spaces and facilities through which activities can be organized and maintained. Without adequate infrastructure, even well-developed ideas can face difficulties in implementation. The availability and quality of infrastructure consequently influence the extent to which youth participation can develop into continuing activities. Infrastructure should therefore be understood not simply as physical support for visitors but also as part of the enabling environment for local actors who contribute to tourism development. When practical conditions are available, young people have greater opportunities to organize activities and connect their initiatives with the wider tourism environment.

Institutional support is similarly important because youth initiatives do not exist outside existing community and governmental structures. Support from the community and relevant institutions can provide recognition, access to resources, and opportunities for collaboration. Such support can also reduce the risk that youth activities remain isolated or dependent on a small number of individuals. Institutional relationships create pathways through which youth initiatives can become connected to broader tourism planning and community priorities. In this way, support contributes to the continuity and legitimacy of youth participation.

Coordination further strengthens these conditions by connecting different forms of support. Youth initiatives often involve several actors whose responsibilities and interests may differ. Government institutions, community leaders, tourism managers, business actors, and young people each occupy different positions within the tourism system. Without coordination, available resources and efforts may remain fragmented. Effective coordination creates opportunities to align activities, clarify responsibilities, and develop shared understandings of tourism priorities. It also allows youth initiatives to become part of broader collective processes rather than operating as separate activities.

Sustained government engagement is particularly relevant because tourism development requires continuity beyond individual projects or temporary interventions. Government involvement can support the provision of infrastructure, training opportunities, institutional coordination, and other resources needed by community actors. However, the findings suggest that government engagement is most meaningful when it complements rather than replaces community initiative. Youth and community actors remain important sources of local knowledge and action, while government institutions can provide an enabling framework within which these initiatives can develop. This relationship creates a more balanced basis for community-based tourism development.

The interaction among these conditions is more important than any single form of support. Training without opportunities to apply new skills may have limited effects, while

infrastructure without active community participation may not generate meaningful local benefits. Similarly, institutional support becomes more effective when accompanied by coordination and sustained engagement. The transformative capacity of youth initiatives therefore emerges through the combination of individual agency and an enabling environment. This helps explain why similar forms of youth participation may produce different outcomes depending on the social and institutional conditions surrounding them.

From this perspective, the findings challenge a simplified understanding of youth-led tourism in which young people's participation is assumed to automatically generate transformation. Youth agency provides the energy and initiative for collective action, but enabling conditions determine whether that energy can be organized, supported, and sustained. The relationship can therefore be understood as youth agency combined with enabling conditions producing stronger collective action and more durable community-based tourism outcomes. This formulation places young people at the center of local action while recognizing that sustainable tourism development is also dependent on the broader systems in which their initiatives are embedded.

Overall, the transformative capacity of youth initiatives at Natsepa is shaped by the interaction between what young people are willing and able to do and the conditions available to support their efforts. Training strengthens capabilities, infrastructure provides practical foundations, institutional support creates recognition and access, coordination connects different actors, and government engagement contributes to continuity. Together, these conditions allow youth participation to move beyond isolated activities toward sustained collective action. Community-based tourism development therefore emerges not simply from youth participation itself, but from the capacity of the wider community and institutional environment to recognize, support, and sustain that participation.

From Youth Participation to Community-Based Tourism Development: An Integrative Model

Taken together, the findings suggest that youth-led community-based tourism in Natsepa operates through a sequential but interconnected process: youth agency leads to collective action, which facilitates social innovation and local entrepreneurship, while environmental stewardship and cultural engagement strengthen the social and ecological foundations of tourism; these processes are then shaped by participatory governance and enabling institutional conditions. The contribution of youth therefore lies not simply in their participation but in their capacity to transform local knowledge, social relationships, and community resources into collective practices. This interpretation extends conventional understandings of CBT by positioning youth agency as a mechanism linking participation with broader community development. The Natsepa case consequently suggests that sustainable youth-led tourism requires not only active young people but also institutions capable of creating the resources, recognition, coordination, and decision-making space necessary for their initiatives to become sustained community action.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that youth-led community-based tourism development in Natsepa is best understood as a connected social process rather than as a collection of separate youth activities. The process begins with youth agency, expressed through the willingness of young people to participate, respond to local opportunities, and contribute to the development of their community. This initial agency becomes more meaningful when it is translated into collective action through cooperation with other young people and community members. In this sense, youth participation provides the initial social energy, while collective action gives that participation an organized and community-oriented direction.

The transition from individual agency to collective action also creates opportunities for social innovation and local entrepreneurship. When young people respond to tourism opportunities, they do not simply reproduce existing activities but can contribute new ways of organizing, providing services, and creating small-scale economic opportunities within the local tourism environment. These initiatives demonstrate that youth participation can generate practical forms of innovation that emerge from local knowledge and everyday experiences. Social innovation in this context does not necessarily depend on complex or technologically advanced interventions. It can develop through relatively simple forms of collective initiative that respond to local needs and tourism opportunities.

At the same time, economic and entrepreneurial activities are connected to the environmental and social foundations of the destination. Environmental stewardship demonstrates that youth involvement extends beyond the pursuit of tourism-related economic benefits. By contributing to the maintenance of the coastal environment, young people participate in protecting the resources that make tourism possible. Similarly, engagement with community values demonstrates that tourism development remains connected to cooperation, mutual assistance, respect, and social relationships. Economic development, environmental responsibility, and cultural continuity therefore operate as interconnected dimensions of community-based tourism rather than as independent objectives.

These processes are further shaped by the governance relationships surrounding youth participation. Youth initiatives become more meaningful when young people have opportunities to communicate with community leaders, the Negeri government, tourism actors, and other stakeholders. Governance provides the space through which local initiatives can be recognized, coordinated, and connected to wider community priorities. However, the findings also demonstrate that participation should not be equated with implementation alone. The transformative potential of youth involvement becomes stronger when young people have opportunities to contribute ideas, participate in planning, and engage with processes through which tourism development is discussed and managed.

The model emerging from the findings can therefore be understood as a dynamic relationship rather than a strictly linear sequence. Youth agency can stimulate collective action, collective action can create opportunities for social innovation and local

entrepreneurship, and these activities can simultaneously strengthen environmental stewardship and cultural continuity. These processes interact with governance arrangements that influence how initiatives are coordinated and supported. At the same time, the availability of training, infrastructure, institutional support, coordination, and sustained government engagement determines whether youth initiatives can be maintained over time. Each element can therefore reinforce the others, creating conditions in which participation develops into more durable forms of community action.

This integrated perspective is important because it shifts attention away from understanding young people simply as a demographic group that should be included in tourism development. The findings instead position youth as active social actors whose knowledge, relationships, creativity, and willingness to participate can contribute to wider processes of community development. Their contribution is not limited to performing tourism-related tasks. Through participation, young people can help connect community resources, social relationships, environmental responsibilities, cultural values, and economic opportunities within a shared tourism process.

The Natsepa case also illustrates that community-based tourism depends on the interaction between local initiative and institutional capacity. Strong youth participation alone cannot guarantee sustained outcomes when the surrounding environment lacks adequate support. Conversely, institutional resources may have limited effects when local actors are not actively involved in shaping and implementing tourism activities. Sustainable development therefore requires a relationship between agency and structure: young people contribute initiative and local knowledge, while community and institutional actors provide the recognition, resources, coordination, and opportunities necessary for those initiatives to develop.

The resulting model can consequently be summarized as an interconnected process in which youth agency activates collective action; collective action creates space for social innovation and local entrepreneurship; environmental stewardship and cultural engagement strengthen the social and ecological foundations of tourism; and participatory governance and enabling conditions support the continuity of these processes. The outcome is not simply increased youth participation but a broader form of community-based tourism development in which local actors become more capable of organizing, maintaining, and shaping tourism within their own community.

Ultimately, the contribution of youth in Natsepa lies in their capacity to transform existing local knowledge, social relationships, and community resources into collective practices that support tourism development. This perspective extends the understanding of community-based tourism by placing youth agency within the broader relationship between participation, collective action, social innovation, environmental responsibility, cultural continuity, and governance. Sustainable youth-led tourism therefore requires more than motivated young people. It requires a community and institutional environment capable of recognizing their contribution, supporting their initiatives, facilitating coordination, and

creating meaningful spaces for participation in decision-making. When these elements operate together, youth participation can move beyond temporary involvement and become part of the continuing social process through which community-based tourism is developed and sustained.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that youth-led initiatives at Natsepa Beach contribute to community-based tourism development by positioning young people not merely as participants in tourism activities, but as local actors who initiate, coordinate, and sustain collective responses to economic, environmental, cultural, and tourism-related needs. The findings indicate that youth agency becomes more meaningful when individual initiatives are connected to collective action involving community members, local entrepreneurs, traditional actors, tourism managers, and government institutions. Through this process, youth participation supports small-scale economic activities, beach cleanliness and environmental stewardship, the maintenance of local social and cultural values, and greater interaction among tourism stakeholders. However, the findings also show that youth agency alone is not sufficient to ensure sustained community-based tourism development; its contribution depends on enabling conditions such as training, infrastructure, institutional support, coordination, and government engagement. The main contribution of this study is therefore not to position youth simply as an additional tourism stakeholder, but to demonstrate how youth agency can function as a connecting mechanism through which participation develops into collective action and contributes simultaneously to local economic opportunities, environmental care, cultural engagement, and participatory tourism governance. In the context of Natsepa Beach, this perspective suggests that strengthening youth capacity and creating meaningful institutional space for their involvement may provide a practical pathway for developing community-based tourism that remains locally grounded, although its sustainability continues to depend on the wider capacity of communities and institutions to support and coordinate youth-led initiatives.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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