



Community Based Tourism as a Supporting Factor for the Tourism Sector in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia Towards a Super Priority Tourism Destination

Mohamad Axel Putra Hadiningrat^{1*}, Beti Nurbaiti², Chotib Hasan³

¹ Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

² Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya, Indonesia

³ Urban Studies Program, School of Strategic and Global Studies, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

mohaxelhadi@gmail.com*, bettsigit@gmail.com,

Chotib@hotmail.com

Abstract. Labuan Bajo, a Super Priority Tourism Destination in East Nusa Tenggara and gateway to Komodo Island, has undergone economic, social, and spatial changes but still faces major challenges. High living costs are unmatched by local incomes, unemployment remains, and basic infrastructure such as clean water, electricity, internet, and roads is uneven. Human resource quality also needs improvement through better education. This study, using qualitative field surveys, highlights the crucial role of social capital—networks, trust, solidarity, and community leadership—in supporting community-based tourism and addressing environmental issues.

Keywords: Labuan Bajo East Nusa Tenggara; Super Priority Tourism Destination; Community Based Tourism; Social Capital

1. Introduction

Labuan Bajo is a location located in West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province with beautiful natural conditions, and is the gateway to Komodo Island (Fig. 1). However, in reality, the condition of supporting infrastructure is still minimal, such as hot mix roads, bridges, clean water, electricity and internet, the cost of living is high with people's incomes still low. The education level of the local community is also still low, on average they have a high school diploma, and the supply chain for raw materials and daily necessities is still mostly imported from outside the island. With this phenomenon, this research was carried out with a qualitative approach, using the results of interview text analysis, to answer the question: "How do people utilize the capital available in their community to support Labuan Bajo to become a Super Priority Tourism Destination?"



Fig. 1. Labuan Bajo Viewed from a Starred Hotel.

2. Literature Review

Community Based Tourism (CBT)

The concept of community-based tourism is a concept that develops the potential of tourist destinations through the empowerment of local communities, where the local people take part in planning, management, and decision-making regarding development in their region (Giampiccoli and Saayman, 2018). There are three tourism activities that can support the CBT concept: (1) adventure travel, (2) cultural tourism, and (3) ecotourism. The community-based tourism concept also involves the community in matters related to income, job opportunities, as well as the preservation of the environment, local culture, and indigenous wisdom. This condition ultimately fosters a sense of identity and pride among the local population, which grows as a result of increased tourism activities (Ernawati et.al, 2019), (Lidona and Cahayani, 2022). Community-based tourism is a form of sustainable development that embraces all stakeholders as key players through the empowerment of the community in various tourism activities (Naranjo, 2022). In this way, the community experiences the benefits of tourism. The main goal of the CBT concept is the development of tourism and the improvement of the local community's welfare (Hamzah and Zainab, 2009).

Thus, the concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is highly relevant to the variables in the author's research, namely social capital, innovation, and motivation, in order to create greater prosperity for the community in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara, according to research by Mukhee et. al (2013) and Mukherjee and Han (2017). The application of CBT in the social capital aspect in this study refers to the presence of networks and groups that serve as fundamental assets in the Labuan Bajo community, NTT, where people interact within a heterogeneous group approach but aim toward a common goal, namely managing local tourism development

opportunities, especially after Labuan Bajo was designated as one of the Super Priority Tourist Destinations (Brain, 2021) and Garrod (2001).

In addition, the social capital aspect applied in this CBT includes a high sense of solidarity to share and impart knowledge, skills, information, opportunities, and income from tourism activities (Aprilani and Cahayani, 2022), (Kääriäinen and Lehtonen, 2006). This is evident when they innovate in culinary businesses offering typical Labuan Bajo souvenirs such as local foods, t-shirts, bags, and handmade crafts, as well as local tourism packages, including renting phinisi boats and speedboats as part of the tourist package (Most et.al, 2023). The community feels motivated by the opportunity to earn additional income, even creating new jobs due to the tourism destination in Labuan Bajo. Vocational schools for tourism also serve as a platform to prepare a workforce ready for employment in tourism, hospitality, culinary arts, and as tour guides, as well as skilled workers in photo and video documentation with drones, which are part of the tourist packages to destinations such as Tidar Island, Komodo, Rinca, Rangko Cave, Waecicu Beach, Warloka, Mawatu, Waerebo, Batu Cermin, Golomori, and other local tourist destinations (Brain, 2001).

Tourism creates job opportunities in rural communities through social networks. In-depth interviews show that local involvement in tourism-related jobs is strongly linked to the density of social connections (Dinh et al., 2023). The growing use of social media in remote areas also helps strengthen external relationships and generate resources for tourism development (Noni et al., 2023). However, tourism can worsen income inequality between and within villages. Therefore, local governments should play a more active role in connecting villagers with tour operators. Future research should focus on the relationship between social networks, inequality, kinship bonds, agrotourism, and sustainable regional development (Suansri et al., 2003). This study adopts an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method to examine the role of social networks in community development, particularly in tourism. While the theory of social networks is well established, few studies link it directly to community-based tourism. In Viet Hai village, social networks influence access to resources—such as financial support, job opportunities, and tourists—that shape villagers' involvement in the tourism industry. Strong kinship-based networks enable some groups to secure tourism jobs, while weaker networks limit opportunities for others.

Tourist villages promote community-based and sustainable development aimed at improving welfare, preserving culture and the environment, and enhancing human resource quality (Dahana et al., 2023). Tourism promotion relies heavily on social media, internet marketing, personal sales, public relations, and direct interaction with visitors. Less-used methods like advertising, direct marketing, and sales promotions remain underutilized due to high costs but hold future potential. Government, stakeholders, academics, and the private sector must support better access to marketing and promotional strategies to boost tourism.

Community-based initiatives have also shown positive effects on poverty alleviation and resource-based business development (Suryatna et al., 2023; Sendjaja et al., 2022). However, government interventions have limited grassroots initiatives, creating power

imbalances and institutional barriers. Partnerships between select residents and authorities often lead to political contestation, restricting broader community empowerment and highlighting governance challenges.

3. Research Method

The research method applied is a qualitative method by conducting in-depth interviews and using Dedoose Software's.

4. Results and Discussion

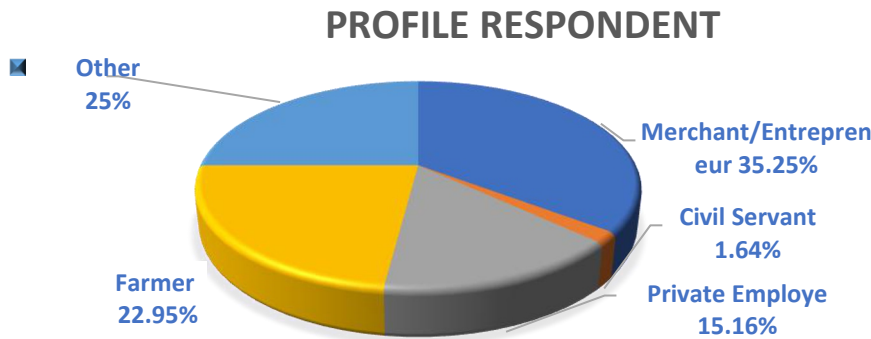


Fig. 2. Profile Based on Respondent's.

As shown in Fig. 2, most respondents are traders or entrepreneurs (35.25%), followed by teachers, religious figures, community leaders, and housewives (25%), farmers (22.95%), private employees (15.16%), and civil servants (1.64%). This shows a strong entrepreneurial spirit among Labuan Bajo's community, driven by the need for self-sufficiency amid high living costs and low regional wages. The higher cost of living compared to Java, especially Jakarta, pushes locals to seek additional income sources to sustain and improve their livelihoods.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED BY THE RESPONDENT

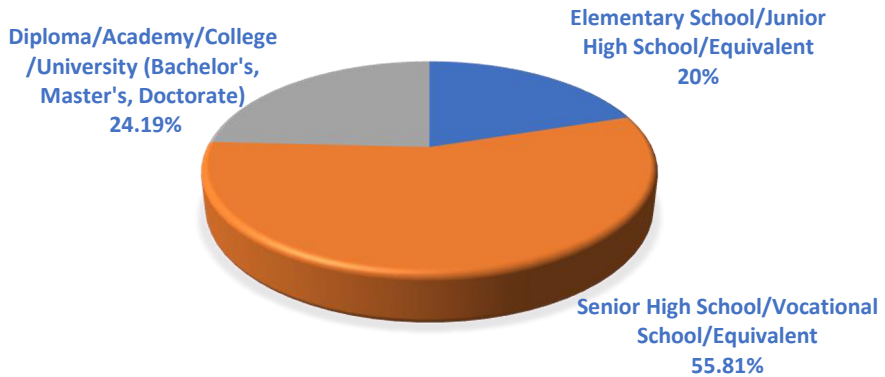


Fig. 3. Profile Based on the Level of Education Completed by Respondents.

As illustrated in Fig. 3, most respondents have a high school/vocational education (55.81%), followed by diploma/university graduates (24.19%) and elementary/middle school graduates (20%). This indicates the need to improve formal education quality through programs such as free tuition, better school access, improved teacher resources, and enhanced infrastructure (Bappeda Manggarai Barat, 2023). Labuan Bajo, often seen as a peripheral community, still faces geographical barriers and limited facilities compared to Java. According to the Manggarai Barat Regency Spatial Plan 2021–2041, the Labuan Bajo urban area consists of eight administrative regions (Bappeda Manggarai Barat, 2023). Since its designation as a Super Priority Tourism Destination, economic inequality has declined, yet the dominance of lower to middle education levels shows the need for continued human resource development (Bappeda Manggarai Barat, 2023).

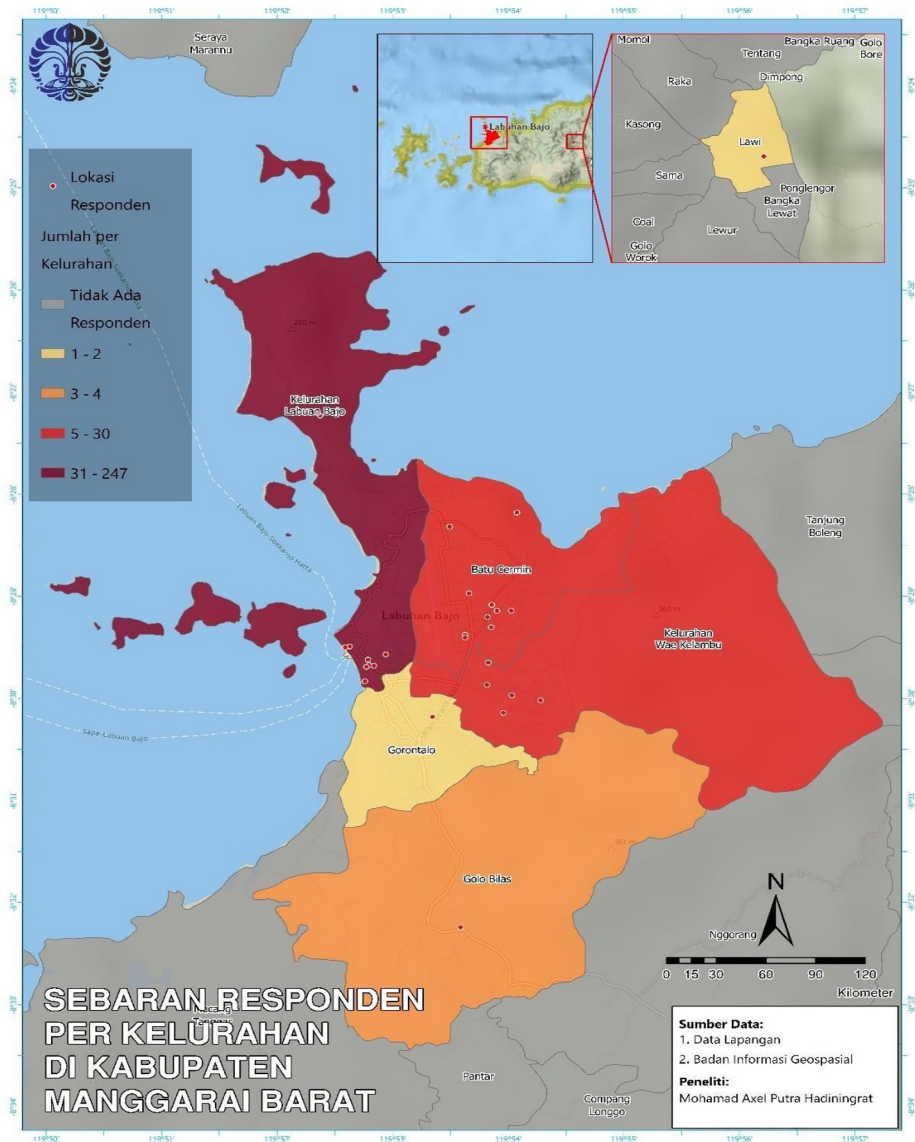


Fig. 4. Distribution of Respondents in Labuan Bajo, West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara.

Based on Fig. 4, the map shows that the highest number of respondents is located in Labuan Bajo Village, followed by Batu Cermin and Wae Kalambe Villages, as well as Golo Bilas and Gorontalo. This study specifically focuses on respondents in Labuan Bajo Village, which is why the highest number of respondents was found in Labuan Bajo Village when the data was collected.



Fig. 5. Indepth Interview Session with Informants by the Survey Team

After the FGD phase, I conducted four days of in-depth interviews in Labuan Bajo with assistance from my team (Fig. 5). Since some participants left early due to work, interviews continued at their homes, workplaces, our hotel, and business locations to gather more detailed insights on research variables. We also visited Mrs. Indo Mase, a small business owner producing Indo Latifa products, at her home-based production site. As appreciation, we gave souvenirs to all participants who contributed valuable information to this research.



Fig. 6. Observation and Q&A at Kosambi Market, Old Market, and Fish Auction Place.

With my team, I visited Kosambi Market, Old Market, and the Fish Auction Place (TPI) in Labuan Bajo to observe the community's daily economic activities (Fig. 6). These

locations reflect the local economy and purchasing power, while also showcasing social capital practices, such as traders helping each other, offering on-site fruit services, and delivering cleaned fish orders for easier home cooking.



Fig. 7. Survey Team Visit to SMES Food Production House in Labuan Bajo

The survey team visited a local SME food production house in Labuan Bajo to understand its role in the local economy and tourism-driven market (Fig. 7). Specializing in traditional snacks and dishes, the owners and workers shared their experiences while demonstrating production processes, from sourcing raw materials to packaging, combining traditional techniques with innovation to meet diverse customer demands.

The team also engaged with the owners to understand the role of social capital in the development of the business. The SMES entrepreneurs explained how community support, information sharing, and skill development have contributed to their success. Many workers, who were initially unfamiliar with the production process, have now become skilled artisans thanks to local knowledge transfer and mentorship. One notable example was Mrs. Latifah, a senior entrepreneur who has volunteered her time to teach other local producers how to make traditional Labuan Bajo cakes, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support, according to research conducted by Adair (2006).

The survey highlighted how the growing tourism sector has positively impacted these small businesses, particularly in the culinary field, which has seen a significant boost due to the influx of tourists. The food production houses, such as the one visited, have played an integral part in showcasing local culture through their products, thus increasing their market reach and income.

In conclusion, the visit to the SMES food production house in Labuan Bajo provided valuable insights into the entrepreneurial spirit, community collaboration, and the pivotal role these small businesses play in the region's economic development, particularly in the tourism sector. The experience underscored the importance of social

capital, innovation, and skill development in building sustainable local enterprises, according to research by Cassiman et. al (2010) and Chatterjee (2011).

The entire interview transcript was processed using Dedoose, a software capable of analyzing qualitative narrative data. Coding was applied not only to the main research variables but also to other key findings that support the study. This approach allowed for the identification and categorization of significant themes and patterns in the data, enriching the overall analysis and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Media	Codes									
	Inovasi	Kebijakan Pemerintah	Kendala Sesuai dengan Profesi	Modal Sosial	Motivasi	Pendapatan Masyarakat	Pengeluaran/konsumsi Rumah	Tingkat Pengangguran	Pemanfaatan Platform Media	Perubahan pada aspek Jenis
7)Roni_Tourism Consultan.docx	1	1	1	3	1				1	1
6)Nurdin_Anggota DPRD.docx	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
5)Meliana_Pelaku UMKM.docx	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
4)Maria Ratnayati.docx	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
3)Marcellino Ogot (Pater Ogot).docx	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
2)Indo mase (Latifa).docx	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
1)Ali Setibun_Anggota DPR.docx	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
(9).rSeverinus Kurniadi. docx	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
(8)Fransiskus Artasman. docx	1	2	1	2	1		1	1	1	1
(10)Andrianus Tanur. docx		2	1	1	1	1	1		2	
Totals	9	12	10	24	11	8	9	8	11	9

Fig. 8. Dedoose Analysis Matrix Results.

Based on the results of the Dedoose data analysis shown in Fig. 8, social capital emerges as the most dominant factor, with the highest score of 24, followed by government policies with a score of 12, and motivation and use of social media platforms with a score of 11. These scores demonstrate that the people of Labuan Bajo are greatly supported in achieving welfare by the social capital they apply in their daily lives. This is also reflected where the dominant factor appears most prominent, with the largest font size, visually emphasizing its significance in the analysis, according to research conducted by Nurbaiti and Chotib (2020).

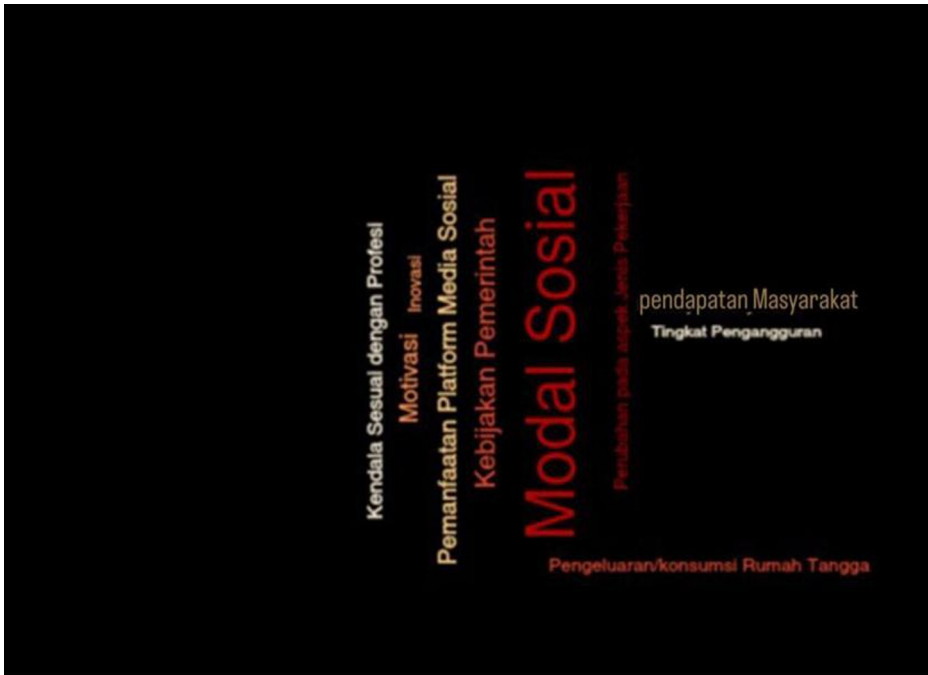


Fig. 9. Dedoose Analysis Results Based on Dedoose Output Image

This condition is consistent with (Fig. 9), where social capital is the dominant factor, shown with the largest font size, followed by government policies, motivation, and the use of social media platforms. These scores indicate that the people of Labuan Bajo achieve welfare with significant support from social capital applied in daily life, along with the backing of local government policies, community motivation, and the utilization of social media in this digital era, according to research conducted by Woodward (2014).

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of both the qualitative and quantitative field surveys, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Labuan Bajo has experienced economic, social, and spatial transformation, but prosperity remains limited.
2. Its status as a Super Priority Tourism Destination has not produced a significant trickle-down effect; high living costs are not matched by local incomes (UMR).
3. Most tourism assets (hotels, cafés, restaurants, attractions) are owned by outsiders, reducing locals' bargaining power and control over wages.
4. Tourism growth has not provided equal job opportunities; many locals remain unemployed.

5. High distribution and transportation costs limit purchasing power, while education and healthcare are deprioritized due to low income.
6. Infrastructure development—roads, street lighting, electricity, clean water, and internet—is uneven, especially in coastal areas like Warloka Pesisir.
7. Social capital, particularly trust, solidarity, and information sharing, plays a key role in supporting community transformation.
8. Social capital enables locals to overcome daily economic and social challenges despite limited resources.
9. The strong “**guyub**” (togetherness) culture supports those facing economic, educational, and skill-related constraints.
10. Mutual trust and information sharing across different religions and beliefs ease family and community burdens.
11. Innovation in Labuan Bajo remains low and insufficient to drive broad community transformation.
12. External support from local government and stakeholders is needed to foster innovation due to Labuan Bajo’s remote location.
13. Customary, religious, and community leaders play a crucial role in solving economic, social, and environmental problems, as well as expanding opportunities.
14. Word-of-mouth communication during traditional and community events remains highly effective for sharing information and opportunities.

Acknowledgments. -

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

References

1. Adair, J.: Leadership and Motivation: the fifty-fifty rule and the eight key principles of motivating others, pp. 69–86. London: Kogan Pae Ltd (2006).
2. Amran Hamzah, & Zainab Khalifah: Handbook on Community Based Tourism "How to Develop and Sustain CBT." (2009).
3. Bashir, I., & Nika, F. A: Impact of Labor Welfare Practices on Worker Motivation: A Study of Select PSUs in Kashmir. The IUP Journal of Management Research, 21 (2022).
4. Cassiman, B., Veugelers, R., & Zuniga, P: Diversity of Science Linkages: A Survey of Innovation Performance Effects and Some Evidence from Flemish Firms. Economics, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.5018/economicsejournal.ja.2010-33> (2010).
5. Chatterjee, C: Intellectual Property, Incentives for Innovation and Welfare - Evidence from the Global Pharmaceutical Industry. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 213 (2011).
6. Ernawati, N. M., Wayan, I., Arjana, B., Made, N., & Sukmawati, R: Managing Community-Based Tourism: A Stakeholder Approach in Bali, Indonesia (2019).
7. Garrod, Brain: Local Partisipation in the Planning and Management of EcoTourism A Resived Model Approach, University of the West of England. Bristol, h. 4 (2001),
8. Giampiccoli, A., & Saayman, M: Community-based tourism development model and community participation. In African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (Vol. 7, Issue 4). www.ajhtl.com (2018).

9. Kääriäinen, J., & Lehtonen, H: The variety of social capital in welfare state regimes - A comparative study of 21 countries. *European Societies*, 8(1), 27–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616690500491399> (2006).
10. Lidona Aprilani, T., & Cahayani, M: Community-Based Tourism Development In Improving Community Welfare In The Mandalika Special Economic Zone (2022).
11. Most. Habiba, & Farhana Yeasmin Lina: Community-Based Tourism (CBT): A Community Development Tool. *European Journal of Business and Management*. <https://doi.org/10.7176/ejbm/15-17-01> (2023).
12. Mukhee, y A., & Bhan, f and U: Patent Protection, Southern Innovation and Welfare in a North-South Trade Model. *Economica*, 80(318), 248–273 (2013).
13. Mukherjee, A., & Han, T.-D: Labor Unionization Structure, Innovation, and Welfare. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, 173(2), 279. <https://doi.org/10.1628/093245616x14785139493983> (2017).
14. Naranjo Lluart, M. R: Theoretical Model for the Analysis of Community-Based Tourism: Contribution to Sustainable Development. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 14(17). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141710635> (2022).
15. Noni Lela Hayati Ayob, & Zuraida Yaacob: An Introduction To Community Based Tourism (2023).
16. Nurbaiti, B., & Chotib: The Impact of Social Capital on Welfare: the Evidence from Urban Informal Sector in East Flood Canal (Bkt), Jakarta. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 436(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/436/1/012004> (2020).
17. Pechlaner, H., Baggio, R., Scott, N., & Cooper, C: Improving tourism destination governance: a complexity science approach. *Tourism Review*, 65(4), 51–60. <https://doi.org/10.1108/16605371011093863> (2010).
18. Sendjaja Suhandi, A., Novianti, E., Oktavia, D., Khan, A. M. A., & Simatupang, W. P: Community Participation Process in Community-Based Tourism Development in Waerebo Traditional Village, Manggarai Regency, Flores. *ASEAN Journal on Hospitality and Tourism*, 20(2), 67–82. <https://doi.org/10.5614/ajht.2022.20.2.05> (2022).
19. Suansri, P., Sewatarmra, B., Momtakhob, K., Lejeune, J., & Richards, P: Community Based Tourism Handbook (Responsible Ecological Social Tour-REST) Community Based Tourism Handbook (2003).
20. Woodward, K: "Pimping the System": How Economic, Social, and Cultural Capital Are Deployed in a Welfare Program. In *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (Vol. 43, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241613483561> (2014).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

