

Strategies and Model for Empowering Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Encouraging Tourism Sector Performance

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Abstract

Tourism can empower (local) communities by providing opportunities for income generation, skills development, and participation. However, the problem question is how community-based tourism can enhance local wisdom, reduce intergenerational gaps, and create sustainable economic opportunities. This paper aims to outline empowerment strategies and models that can be adopted to boost the tourism sector's performance. It also applies to indigenous and local communities in Papua. The study uses a qualitative approach. In this method, we are involved in continuous and ongoing experiences with informants. The paper uses Prasojo's theory of empowerment strategies (2004). This strategy can be implemented in four steps: First, socialize the role of the community as a subject, both as the leading actor and/or actively participating, and second, utilizing a more democratic development implementation mechanism through governance and community participation principles. Third, mobilizing human resources and, finally, maximizing the role of the government in facilitating, regulating, and providing assistance to ensure a conducive tourism business and investment climate. We recommend encouraging community tourism initiatives in Papua and ensuring that the benefits of tourism remain in their hands and that cultural practices are preserved and respected. In addition, it is necessary to foster collective partnerships between communities and other stakeholders. These partnerships can help leverage resources, share knowledge, and encourage sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: empowerment model; local community; tourism

1. Introduction

Empowerment can be understood as expanding the resources and capacities of individuals to participate, negotiate, control, and demand accountability from the institutions that affect their lives. The state should ensure that marginalized groups have access, promote choice, and strengthen their accountability. Institutional inclusion, which implies institutional reform, allows policy outcomes and impacts to be distributed equitably across society (Ulum & Anggaini, 2020). Community empowerment enables individuals or groups to gain control over their lives and work collectively (Bedigen, W., 2022; Dolezal, C. & Novelli, M., 2022; Gu, G. et al., 2024; Mawutor, S. M., & Hajjar, R., 2024; Thakur, P. et al., 2023).

Empowerment emphasizes incorporating local contexts into development initiatives to enhance sustainability and effectiveness. In the context of tourism, it is also mentioned that empowering marginalized groups within tourism is crucial. From the perspective of sustainable tourism development, inclusive practices that consider diverse voices (interests) in the decision-making process, particularly in managing tourism resources derived from



nature, are needed.

Indigenous cultural knowledge is fundamental to empowering Indigenous and local communities (Schmider, J. et al., 2024). This involves enhancing assets and capacity to access resources, partners, and networks, thereby increasing control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives. Community empowerment initiatives can also preserve cultural heritage and promote environmental sustainability.

For instance, community-based tourism can enhance local wisdom, reduce intergenerational gaps, and create sustainable economic opportunities. Integrating Indigenous cultural knowledge into tourism promotes sustainable and respectful practices. Ultimately, there is a need to advocate for sustained support for Indigenous communities to navigate the complexities of the tourism sector, ensuring they can engage meaningfully while preserving their cultural integrity. This aligns with the strategy of empowering Indigenous and local communities to enhance the tourism sector's performance through authentic representation and sustainable practices.

Further, regarding the empowerment of Indigenous and local communities in boosting tourism sector performance, there exists a complex relationship among Indigenous communities, policymakers, and local traders in the context of rural tourism development in Indonesia (Dolezal, C., & Novelli, M., 2022; Drasospolino et al., 2023; Situmorang, R. et al., 2019; Sopaheluwakan, W. R. I., et al., 2023). These studies emphasize the importance of community-based tourism (CBT) in empowering local communities and promoting sustainable development.

However, they reveal that participation in tourism does not automatically lead to empowerment due to existing hierarchical structures, limited resources, and local elite dominance. This research highlights the need for effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure fair benefits from tourism initiatives. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of building the capacity of Indigenous communities through training and resources to enhance entrepreneurial opportunities and promote a more inclusive tourism environment. These findings suggest that although CBT can transform communities, it requires careful management of relationships and resources to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities.

Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism states that tourism is an integral part of national development carried out systematically, planned, integrated, sustainable, and responsible while protecting religious values, culture that lives in society, environmental sustainability and quality, and national interests. Tourism also provides a reliable and consistent income stream, which can help stabilize the economy. This diversification helps mitigate the impact of fluctuations in other industries. Regarding this issue, we can see the trend of foreign exchange income in the tourism sector in Figure 1 as follows :



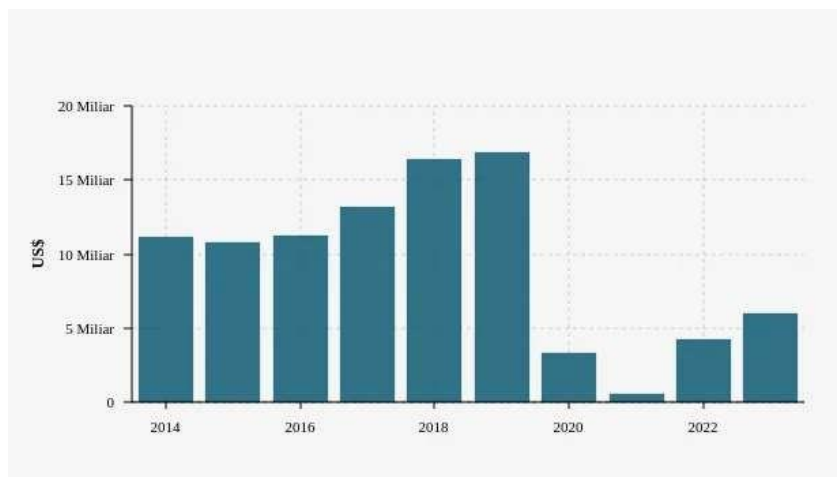


Figure 1. Foreign Exchange Income of the Tourism Sector (2014-2023)

Source: databoks.katadata.co.id (2024)

Tourism has the potential to create many jobs, both directly and indirectly. It supports industries such as hospitality, transportation, and retail, thereby increasing employment opportunities and better economic prospects for indigenous peoples and local communities. Another crucial context is that tourism can empower local communities by providing opportunities for increased income, skills development, and community participation.

Overall, improving the tourism sector's performance is very important for economic growth, social development, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, infrastructure improvement, community empowerment, business opportunities, and destination image, making it an important sector for many countries. In the context of empowerment, tourism can make indigenous peoples and local communities independent by providing opportunities for increased income, skills development, and community participation. This can lead to improved living standards and increased community ownership of the development process.

Papua consists of six provinces with an area of 418,707.7 km² out of a total area of 785,753 km² (part of the territory of Papua New Guinea), the largest island in Indonesia. The six provinces have a variety of tourist destinations. In addition to the Lorentz National Park as the largest national park in Southeast Asia, there are at least six popular tourist destinations on Papua Island: Lake Sentani, Base-G Beach, Wasur National Park, Baliem Valley, Wafsarak Waterfall, Raja Ampat.

Table 1. Tourism Potential Profile of Six Provinces in Papua Island

Provinsi / Potency	Province of Southwest Papua	Province of West Papua	Province of Central Papua	Province of Mountains Papua	Province of South Papua	Papua Province
Capital	Sorong City	Manokwari Regency	Nabire Regency	Jayawijaya Regency	Merauke Regency	Jayapura City
Area	39.122,95	99.398,26	61.072,91	43.963,54 km ²	117.849,1	82.680,95
	km ²	km ²	km ²		6 km ²	km ²



Population	627.127	578.696	1.472,91	1.467,06	542.075	1,05 million (2023)
3A (Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 36 Tourism Villages; 104 Attractions; 34 Education Packages; 11 Culinary Packages ▪ Advanced: Kampung Sauwand arek, Meos Mansar, Raja Ampat Regency (ADWI20 24) ▪ 15 Star Hotels (2.227 rooms) ▪ Domine Eduard Osok Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 34 Tourism Villages; 41 Attractions ; 11 Education Packages; 14 Culinary Packages ▪ Advanced: Maas Tourism Village, Fakfak & Kampung Ugar Tourism Village, Fakfak ▪ 2 Star Hotels (1.751 rooms) ▪ Airports: Siboru & Rendani 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 Tourism Village; 0 Attractions; 0 Education Packages; 0 Culinary Package ▪ Pioneer: Gamei Biru Tourism Village, Nabire Regency ▪ 45 Hotels ▪ Mozes Kilangin Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 Tourism Villages; 12 Attractions; 4 Education Packages; 9 Culinary Packages ▪ Pioneer: 12 Villages ▪ 29 Hotels ▪ Oksibil Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 Tourism Village; 0 Attractions; 0 Education Package; 0 Culinary Package ▪ Pioneer: Kampung Kumbe District Malind, Merauke Regency ▪ 56 Hotels ▪ Mopah Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 61 Tourism Villages; 131 Attractions; 83 Education Packages; 50 Culinary Packages ▪ Advanced: Kampung Yoboi, Sentani, Jayapura Regency ▪ 139 Hotels ▪ Sentani Airport

Source: Authors Document (2024)

However, it is still poorly managed, impacting socio-economic conditions. The people who live in the area are generally still poor (Ismail, 2020). While community involvement in decision-making and implementation, government support in regulation and program infrastructure is key to the success of the tourism program (Wulansari et al., 2021 & Sukoco et al., 2024). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to describe the strategies and models for empowering Indigenous peoples and local communities that can be taken to encourage the performance of the tourism sector so that it can later contribute, among other things, to poverty alleviation.



2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. In this method, researchers are involved in continuous and ongoing experiences with partisans (Sugiyono, 2017). This type of research is descriptive-analytical, which means that data is obtained from observations, interviews, photography, document analysis, and field notes, which are then analyzed and presented as descriptive narratives. The research location was in Merauke Regency, with the research site in the Wasur Regency Tourism Development Area (*Kawasan Pengembangan Pariwisata Kabupaten-KPPK*). The reason for choosing the location and research site is that Merauke Regency has quite a significant potential related to local tourism, and until now, it has not been optimal.

Furthermore, the research focuses on empowerment strategy. It is as follows (Prasojo, 2004) :

1. Socialization of the role of the community as a subject, both as the main actor and/or taking part.
2. Utilizing development implementation mechanisms more democratically.
3. Mobilizing resources professionally.
4. Maximizing the role of the government in facilitating, regulating, and providing assistance—financial or technical—around the empowerment object.

In this study, the data analysis technique refers to the method proposed by Creswell & Creswell (2023), which consists of several systematic stages. The process begins with organizing and preparing the data for analysis, including sorting and grouping information according to its sources. A thorough reading follows this to obtain a general overview and understand the underlying meaning within the data, particularly concerning the empowerment of indigenous and local communities in the tourism sector. Next, data codification is carried out by identifying key topics, grouping similar themes, and forming categories for further analysis. Through this coding process, the main themes emerge, which are then developed into a more complex narrative structure. The data analysis is conducted using a code-to-theme approach and reviewed using relevant interpretative frameworks, such as narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, or case studies. The final stage of the analysis involves presenting and interpreting the data through a narrative approach. The data can be presented as a chronological account of events, an in-depth discussion of the main themes, subthemes, and specific illustrations that reflect individual perspectives and relevant quotations. This process aims to provide a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

3. Results and Discussion

a. Empowerment strategies to boost tourism sector performance in Papua

1. Socialization of the Role of Society as a Subject

The role of the community (as a subject) is vital for supporting learning, building self-confidence, broadening perspectives, accountability, and effective public management. They are expected to be able to improve (economic) welfare and develop their capacity. Togetherness, solidarity, tolerance, the spirit of cooperation, and the



ability to empathize are social capital inherent in community life. Without social capital, outsiders quickly intervene and destroy society (Yuliyanti, 2018). Meanwhile, the contribution of the gross domestic product in tourism sector (accommodation and food-beverages) in Papua, especially Merauke Regency, to the regional economy can be seen in Table 2 as follows :

Table 2. Tourism Industry Contribution in Merauke Regency to the Local Economy (Based on Gross Domestic Product)

Year	Rank	Value (Million IDR)	%
2014	15	112,634	1.26
2015	14	130,606	1.28
2016	14	152,691	1.31

Source: BPS (2017)

Communities play a crucial role in shaping a region's social, economic, and political structures by being involved in decision-making and fulfilling their demands and interests. In the meantime, participation is an active process. Ideally, the community takes the initiative (Ulum & Anggaini, 2020). Active participation in public planning and decision-making increases transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and responsiveness to the community's diverse needs. Sustainable tourism sector performance will be realized when community actors are involved. Participation is the key to the success of local tourism sector development, which emphasizes the existence of indigenous peoples and local Papuan communities.

2. Utilizing Development Implementation Mechanisms Democratically

The urgency of development in the context of democracy lies in its ability to advance democratic principles, protect human rights, encourage economic growth, ensure inclusiveness, enhance accountability, and involve the business world in supporting the functioning of democracy. These elements collectively contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. Democracy emphasizes inclusiveness, ensuring everyone's perspective is valued, and their right to shape their lives and culture is respected.

This inclusiveness is crucial for sustainable tourism development, ensuring that each individual's voice is considered in decision-making. The paradigm shift from government to governance emphasizes the existence of a healthy democratic life. Face-to-face dialogues are essential for stakeholders, including government, private sector, and communities, to meet and discuss in person (Putri et. al., 2024). The proportion of the dominant public sector has been reduced with the existence of democratic spaces, both in terms of deliberative policy and the principles of collaborative governance. Community participation will grow in an atmosphere of healthy democratic mechanisms.

Meanwhile, there are eight guiding principles in the framework of collaborative governance, which include: 1) Communities must be involved in the production of



public goods; 2) Communities must be able to mobilize resources and assets to solve public problems; 3) Experts must provide their knowledge to the community to empower them; 4) Policy must be the subject of public discussion; 5) Policy must be the result of ongoing collaboration in partnership; 6) The use of strategy in policy; 7) The use of institutions in empowering communities and solving community problems must be changed by policy; 8) Accountability in policy is needed (Seigler, 2011).

3. Mobilizing Resources

Empowerment values diverse perspectives, leading to better decision-making and increased innovation. This can be understood as expanding individual-community resources and capacities (Ulum & Anggaini, 2020). Human resource mobilization is also a process of acquiring and utilizing a community's citizens' collective abilities, skills, and knowledge to achieve its goals and objectives. Additionally, the factors of social capital are almost similar to the factors of tourism resources, namely the availability of knowledge and skills among residents in providing services that meet the needs of tourists (Kadun & Nurjaman, 2024).

The BPS survey in 2010, in which only two provinces were Papua and West Papua (before the expansion), stated that there were 2,121,436 people (76.32%) indigenous Papuans in Papua Island. The JERAT Papua NGO noted that there were 257 tribes divided into seven large customary areas: 1) Mamta/Tabi Customary (87 tribes); 2) Saireri Customary (31 tribes); 3) Doberai Customary (52 tribes); 4) Bomberai Customary (19 tribes); 5) La Pago Customary (19 tribes); 6) Me Pago Customary (11 tribes); 7) Anim Ha/Ha Anim Customs (29 tribes). The tourism sector's performance will increase when the empowerment of indigenous peoples and local Papuan communities is realized.

The results of increased performance in the tourism sector impact increasing welfare. This means that the tourism niche will be broad and will successfully produce communal economic growth if the involvement of indigenous peoples and local Papuan communities is mobilized appropriately and sustainably. Moreover, this is because the typology of the tourism sector, which is a service sector, is closely related to the quantity and quality of human resources that are the mainstay (performance) of the tourism sector.

4. Maximizing the Role of Government in Facilitating, Regulating, and Providing Financial or Technical Assistance

The government facilitates reducing economic disparities and ensuring that resources (in tourism) are distributed fairly. The government also implements policies aimed at protecting the environment, addressing problems such as climate and environmental crises. This is important to preserve natural resources and ensure a sustainable future.

The public sector (government) must be more adaptive as a regulator and facilitator of the empowerment of indigenous peoples and local communities in Papua. Adaptive governance refers to the evolution of rules and norms that encourage the satisfaction of human needs and preferences along with changes in understanding,



goals, and social, economic, and environmental contexts (Hatfield-Dodds *et al.*, 2007). The tourism sector's performance requires stable/conducive conditions to ensure a healthy and sustainable business-investment climate. Policies and other implementing regulations should be supporters of the tourism sector ecosystem to perform and grow well.

b. Trilogy of Mainstreaming Empowerment of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Papua

The Model of Empowerment Mainstreaming Trilogy can be adapted through intervention and strengthening the empowerment of indigenous peoples and local communities in Papua. Of course, this is intended to encourage the tourism sector's performance. In general, the pillars of development that are oriented towards community empowerment can be mapped through three pillars (helix): government helix, private helix, and community helix, which simultaneously have roles.

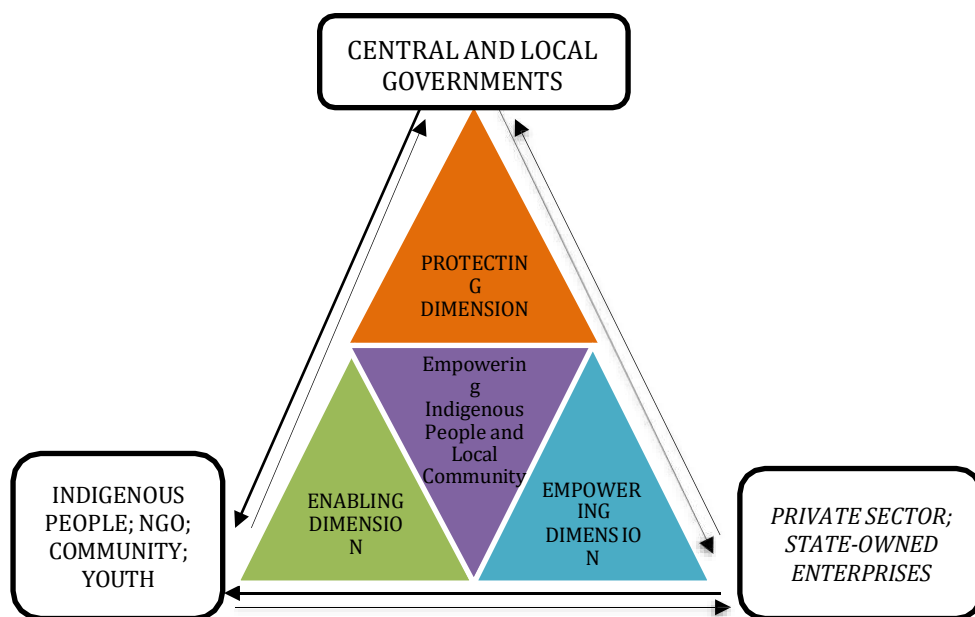


Figure 2. Model of Empowerment Mainstreaming Trilogy for Indigenous People and Local Community

Source: Adopted from Sugandi (2011)

According to Sugandi (2011), the dimensions of empowerment are as follows :

1. Enabling Dimension

Nowadays, the tourism sector is closely related to the paradigm of sustainable tourism development, so it is not only oriented towards the number of visits. The tourism sector's performance is very appropriate if it is driven by the presence of local communities who understand and develop their potential for current tourism. This potential is in the form of tourist attractions and a unique creative economy (genuine), known as local wisdom. At least 3A tourism (Attractions, Amenities, and Accessibility) can grow and be prepared together. Awareness of the development of tourism wealth comes from collective action from various elements of society.

The Enabling dimension aims to become a space for society to develop. The



empowerment of this dimension emphasizes the recognition that every human being and every society has the potential to be created. This seeks to present empowerment as an effort to build that power by encouraging, motivating, and raising awareness of the potential it has and trying to develop it.

2. Empowering Dimension

As a sector that can become a lever for development with a limitless nature, tourism must be supported by performance that does not work as usual. The increase in the performance of the Papua tourism sector will grow rapidly through social transformation and full empowerment, which is measured by increasing the capacity of Indigenous peoples and local Papuan communities by strengthening the potential or power possessed by the community. Therefore, support for a solid economic and financial structure.

A critical aspect of supporting the 3A of tourism is infrastructure so that it can open accessibility and develop amenities and increasingly attractive tourist attractions. The unity of resources owned by business entities, both central and regional, as well as the contribution of the private sector in participating in building tourism, will be input as well as resources that have a strong driving force to encourage the performance of the tourism sector. In addition, the principle of good corporate governance as a form of professionalism in the business sector will drive empowerment and leverage tourism potential to become superior. The empowerment dimension provides reinforcement that includes actual steps, such as delivering various inputs and opening access to multiple opportunities that can make the community more empowered.

3. Protecting Dimension

The tourism sector's performance, which has now been proven to be a leverage for development, especially in the regions, must be in economic, political, social, and cultural conditions. This requires a conducive situation so that actors and stakeholders, as well as tourism sector investors, can perform well, supported by policy stability, security, and order. Policies that have an incentive image for stimulus and a top-down-bottom-up image for intervention will strengthen the tourism sector's performance.

The protecting dimension is a form of protecting interests by developing a protection system for the community that is the subject of tourism development. The empowerment process must prevent the weak from becoming weaker due to their lack of power in facing the strong. Protection in this context is seen as an effort to prevent unbalanced competition and the exploitation of the strong over the weak.

The protecting efforts the public sector provides can be of the micro, mezzo or macro approach. The micro approach is carried out at the individual level or by one party through guidance and training in the form of personal assignments (task-centered approach). The mezzo approach is carried out at the group entity



level, which is carried out to build awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the group to have the ability to solve the problems faced. Meanwhile, the macro approach (general strategy) is through the formulation and determination of policies supported by good policy implementation tools and resources, as well as supervision and control.

4. Conclusion

Empowerment strategies can be implemented to encourage the performance of the tourism sector in Papua. First, socialization of the role of the community as a subject, both as the leading actor and/or taking part with active participation. Second, utilizing a more democratic development implementation mechanism through governance and community participation principles. Third, mobilization of human resources. Finally, the role of the government should be maximized in facilitating, regulating, and providing assistance to ensure a conducive and sustainable tourism business and investment climate. Currently, the empowerment strategy for Indigenous peoples and local communities in Papua to support the performance of the tourism sector is still not optimal, so it requires intervention and strengthening of community empowerment comprehensively and sustainably.

Model of Empowerment Mainstreaming Trilogy through several dimensions: Enabling Dimension, Empowering Dimension, and Protecting Dimension. These dimensions are oriented towards the empowerment of the three pillars, namely the elements of the government helix, private helix, and community helix, which simultaneously have their respective roles and characteristics.

One suggestion for the tourism sector is to encourage initiatives where indigenous peoples and local communities in Papua have control over tourism operations. This ensures that they retain the benefits of tourism and that cultural practices are preserved and respected. Last, fostering collective partnerships between indigenous peoples-local communities in Papua and other stakeholders, such as the government (central and regional), NGOs, and private sector actors. These partnerships can help leverage resources, share knowledge, and encourage sustainable tourism development.

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