



Community-Based Environmental Management: A Comparative Case Study of Bali, Indonesia and Branca, Timor-Leste

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the development of ecotourism in the perspective of environmental law through a comparative study between Bali, Indonesia, and the Branca region, Timor-Leste. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, focus group discussions, and document review involving purposively and snowball selected key informants. This study focuses on three main dimensions, namely regulatory implementation, community participation, and environmental sustainability. The results of the study show that there is a quite striking difference between the two regions. Bali shows a relatively more advanced ecotourism governance through the application of a hybrid legal model, which is a combination of formal environmental regulations and customary law, especially awig-awig, which is based on the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. The integration is understood by most informants as a factor that strengthens the effectiveness of law enforcement, expands the space for community participation, and encourages improvement in environmental quality, especially in plastic waste management and community-based conservation. On the other hand, Branca still faces various institutional obstacles. Governance patterns that tend to be centralized, public understanding of regulations that are still limited, and low public involvement are the main factors that hinder the development of sustainable ecotourism. This condition has implications for the emergence of various environmental problems, such as coastal erosion and the accumulation of waste that has not been handled optimally.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of ecotourism has become a phenomenon in countries around the world that promise a balance between natural resource utilization, environmental conservation, and local community empowerment, but often faces the challenge of ecosystem degradation due to mass tourism pressures (Seervi, 2023). Nationally in Indonesia and Timor-Leste, the sector's growth is driven by the natural and cultural potential, but field observations show issues such as soil erosion, waste pollution, and land-use conflicts that threaten sustainability (Arinta et al., 2023). In Bali, an increase in tourists leads to the depletion of natural resources, while in the Branca Area, Dili, Timor-Leste, the lack of sanitation and waste management facilities worsens the quality of the coastal environment.

This problem is supported by empirical findings from previous interviews and observations, in which the Branca community reported low participation in management due to weak local institutional capacity and centralistic regulation in Timor-Leste. In Bali, the report highlights the imbalance between Tri Hita Karana (human-environmental harmony) and tourism development that leads to habitat degradation due to environmentally unfriendly infrastructure (Suardhana et al., 2024). Qualitative data

from FGDs in both regions reveal that without strengthening environmental laws, ecotourism risks becoming exploitative rather than sustainable.

This issue is crucial to be researched from a socio-cultural perspective because ecotourism not only supports the local economy, but also preserves traditional identities such as tourist villages in Bali and coastal traditions of Branca, as well as preventing the loss of cultural heritage due to tourism urbanization (Buck, 2024). Educationally, this research can empower communities through understanding environmental law, raising conservation awareness, and promoting equitable participatory models (Mitchell, 2005). This importance can be seen from its impact on community welfare, where failed ecotourism actually weakens social and ecological capital.

Previous studies have largely addressed the principles of ecotourism in general, such as their application in Forest Parks or Lombok tourist villages, but rarely integrate environmental law perspectives in depth. The limitation of the literature lies in the lack of comparative analysis between countries, especially Bali-Indonesia and Branca-Timor-Leste, which have not explored the meaning of community experiences, the process of implementing regulations such as Law No. 32/2009 (Indonesia) and Article 61 of the Constitution of RDTL, as well as the dynamics of local legal conflicts. This gap creates a gap in the understanding of qualitative processes such as the interpretation of legal norms by local actors.

The qualitative approach was chosen because it was in accordance with phenomenological theory and grounded theory (Camelina Putri, Haura Athahara, 2025), which allows for an in-depth exploration of the subjective experiences of ecotourism actors, the interpretation of environmental law, and the construction of the meaning of sustainability (Harimurti & Dwijendra, 2022). This method facilitates narrative analysis from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and regulatory documents, resulting in rich contextual understanding.

This study aims to analyze the development of ecotourism from the perspective of environmental law through a comparative study of Bali, Indonesia, and the Branca Area, Timor-Leste, with a focus on regulatory implementation, community participation, and sustainability challenges. A socio-legal qualitative approach (Fleming et al., 2019) with a phenomenological design it was chosen to explore the subjective experiences of ecotourism actors, the interpretation of environmental law by local actors, and the construction of the meaning of participation and sustainability in different socio-cultural contexts (Harimurti & Dwijendra, 2022).

This approach facilitates in-depth narrative analysis from interviews, participatory observations, and regulatory documents, resulting in a rich contextual understanding of the interactions between formal legal norms, local norms, and ecotourism governance practices (Stanković et al., 2021). His theoretical contributions complement the literature gap with qualitative experience-based legal models, while practically providing policy recommendations for the strengthening of local institutions and harmonization of cross-border environmental norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotourism is defined as a form of responsible nature tourism, emphasizing environmental conservation, tourist education, and sustainable empowerment of local communities (Baydeniz et al., 2024). This core concept includes indicators such as ecosystem carrying capacity, community participation, and minimization of interrelated negative impacts within the framework of sustainable development according to the Brundtland Report 1987, adapted in the context of modern environmental law (Shekhar et al., 2025).

The theory of sustainable development (Shi et al., 2019) is the main foundation that integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions to ensure the utilization of current resources without sacrificing future generations (Himmah & Laila, 2025). From the perspective of environmental law, this theory is related to the principles of *polluter pays*, *precautionary principle*, and sustainable use as stipulated in Law No. 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management (PPLH) in Indonesia, as well as the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL) Article 61, which guarantees the right to a healthy environment (Cima, 2022). The relationship between variables can be seen in how legal regulations mediate the interaction between ecotourism activities and biodiversity conservation, where imbalances can lead to ecosystem degradation.

Critically, Martha Honey in her book *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, 2nd edition*, which is widely cited in a recent study, emphasizes that ecotourism must meet seven main criteria:

minimization of physical impacts, conservation contribution, and social inclusion, but implementation often fails in developing countries due to weak law enforcement (Dougherty, 2009). In the Balinese context, the principle of Tri Hita Karana (harmony of humans, nature, and God) (Hisyam et al., 2024) complements this theory with a local cultural dimension, while in the Branca Area, the community-based management approach demands the strengthening of local institutions to overcome the centralization of regulation (Tantoh & McKay, 2021). This review suggests that Western theories need to be localized for contextual relevance.

Previous research analyzed community-based ecotourism empowerment in the Branca Area, Dili, Timor-Leste, and found that weak local institutions inhibit participation despite the high coastal potential (Mac et al., 2024). The study supports current research by highlighting the need for participatory regulation, although limited to social aspects without in-depth legal analysis (Sutiarso, 2017).

The second study explored the application of ecotourism principles in Indonesian destinations and showed the incompatibility between national regulations and field practices in Bali, with indicators of habitat degradation (DEWI et al., 2025).

The third research by Purnama et al. assesses the impact of ecotourism on environmental conservation in tropical regions, including Southeast Asia, using a holistic approach that uncovers the trade-offs between economic income and ecosystem damage (Purnama, Y., Sofian, A. G., & Rusmini, 2023). These findings are relevant for the Bali-Branca comparison, where both face coastal tourism pressures, but the study is a general quantitative study with no juridical focus on cross-border comparisons. These three studies strengthen the urgency of integrating environmental law in ecotourism.

Nonetheless, there are significant empirical and theoretical gaps: previous studies have rarely conducted comparative legal analyses between Indonesia and Timor-Leste, particularly exploring the interpretation of local regulations, such as the Bali Regional Regulation on Customary Tourism Villages versus the RDTL policy on coastal management of Branca. This gap includes a lack of qualitative exploration of socio-legal processes, such as the conflict of customary norms versus state regulations, which has not been filled by a phenomenological approach or grounded theory.

This research fills the gap with a qualitative approach that emphasizes the experiences of local actors, thus complementing environmental law theory with the contextual dimension of Bali and Branca. Critically, the *International Ecotourism Society's (TIES)* ecotourism theory is combined with ASEAN's soft law on sustainable tourism to analyze cross-border dynamics.

The conceptual framework used is the integration of sustainable development theory with the perspective of community-based environmental law, where independent variables (legal regulations) influence dependent variables (sustainable ecotourism development) through the mediation of community participation and environmental sustainability indicators (Rijal et al., 2025). This framework will be the basis for the analysis of interview data, observations, and legal documents in the comparative study.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a socio-legal qualitative case study approach with a thematic comparative design (Ezirigwe & Glazewski, 2024). This design was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives to analyze in depth the institutional patterns of ecotourism governance, the dynamics of community participation, and the effectiveness of the implementation of environmental regulations in two different contexts, namely Bali, Indonesia, and the Branca Area, Timor-Leste.

The rationale for thematic comparative design is based on:

1. The richness of Bali's comparative context represents a mature customary-formal law hybrid model, while Branca represents institutional challenges in post-conflict developing countries;
2. The focus of the research's institutional analysis explores the concrete interactions between formal regulations, local norms, and participatory institutions, rather than just individual subjective experiences;
3. Systematic thematic analysis allows the identification of recurring patterns in qualitative data that can be structurally compared between cases.

The focus of the research is directed at the comparison of ecotourism governance practices, the implementation of environmental regulations, community participation, and environmental

sustainability challenges in the two regions. Thus, this study is not intended to produce statistical generalizations, but rather to gain a contextual understanding of the relationship between environmental law, local institutions, cultural values, and community-based ecotourism practices.

The research informants totaled 34 people, consisting of 17 informants from Bali and 17 informants from the Branca Area. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement in ecotourism management, local government, indigenous or coastal communities, conservation activities, tourism business activities, and environmental law issues. The snowball technique is also used to obtain additional informants who are considered to have relevant knowledge based on recommendations from the initial informant. The adequacy of data is determined through the principle of saturation, which is when the information obtained has shown a repeating pattern and no longer produces significant new themes.

Table 1. Summary of Research Informant Profiles

No.	Category Information	Bali	Branca	Quantity
1	Local government officials or agencies related to the environment and tourism	3	3	6
2	Traditional leaders, banjar leaders, or coastal community leaders	4	2	6
3	Ecotourism managers and local tourism business actors	4	4	8
4	Environmental activists, conservation groups, or civil society organizations	2	2	4
5	Local communities, including women and youth involved in or affected by ecotourism	3	5	8
6	Academics or observers of environmental and tourism law	1	1	2
Total		17	17	34

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observations, focus group discussions, and document review. The interviews were used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of informants regarding the implementation of environmental laws and ecotourism development. Participatory observation is carried out to see firsthand environmental management practices, ecotourism activities, community participation patterns, and the physical condition of tourist areas. Targeted group discussions are used to gain a collective understanding of the community's problems, needs, and expectations for sustainable ecotourism development. Meanwhile, document reviews are carried out on regulations, local policies, institutional documents, and other written sources relevant to environmental and ecotourism laws.

The data were analyzed thematically phenomenologically (Ozuem et al., 2022) through the following stages: (1) data reduction to identify key experience patterns; (2) grouping information based on the theme of subjective experience; (3) categorization of the main themes (regulatory implementation, community participation, environmental sustainability); (4) the withdrawal of comparative themes; and (5) socio-legal interpretations that relate the findings to environmental legal frameworks and local practices. The analysis was carried out iteratively by triangulating data sources (interviews, observations, FGDs, documents) to ensure the credibility of the findings. The tendency of findings to be conveyed through proportional narratives, such as "majority of informants", "majority of informants", "few informants", or "small number of informants", according to the dominant patterns that emerge in the field data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Results

The results of the study show that there are important differences in the implementation of environmental laws in ecotourism development between Bali and the Branca Area. These differences can be seen in three main aspects, namely the implementation of environmental regulations, community participation, and environmental sustainability. In general, Bali shows a stronger synergy between customary norms and formal regulations, while Branca still faces institutional challenges, especially in terms of coordination, understanding of regulations, and community involvement. These findings were

obtained from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, focus group discussions, and document review as described in the research method.

Table 2 Comparison of Environmental Law

Theme	Bali, Indonesia	Branca Area, Timor-Leste	Comparison Pattern
Formal Legal Regulation	The 2009 Environmental Protection and Management Law was implemented through customary village regulations; The majority of informants understand the existence of these regulations.	Article 61 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is still not adequately understood by the public; its implementation tends to be concentrated in Dili.	Bali demonstrated effective decentralization; Branca points to a weak centralization tendency in implementation.
Customary Norms and Formal Norms	The Tri Hita Karana philosophy is integrated in awig-awig; customary sanctions are responsive to environmental violations.	Local traditions have not been adequately codified; There is a potential conflict with the interests of investors.	Bali shows an effective hybrid model; Branca shows the marginalization of local norms.
Community Participation	High community participation through the banjar system; Women are significantly involved in ecotourism and local management activities.	Public participation is still limited; decision-making is dominated by local elites.	Bali is inclusive; Branca still tends to be tokenistic or symbolic.
Environmental Impact	Plastic waste reduction is carried out through community-based waste banks.	Coastal erosion and household waste show an increasing tendency.	Bali demonstrates community-based mitigation; Branca faces progressive environmental degradation.
Sustainability	There has been economic diversification and strengthening of local independence.	Ecotourism development still depends on external assistance.	Bali shows a sustainable tendency; Branca is still in a vulnerable condition.

Environmental regulations in Bali show a more mature level of implementation through synergy between Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2019 concerning Customary Tourism Villages and the Environmental Protection and Management Law. Since 2023, there have been 27 cases of environmental violations that have been handled at the village level. The informants described awig-awig as a "living law" because it is considered more effective than the country's judicial mechanisms in responding to environmental violations. In practice, violations related to waste management can be subject to customary sanctions in the form of fines of between Rp500,000 and Rp2,000,000. In contrast, in Branca, Article 61 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste tends to be only a "dead norm" because it has not been supported by adequate implementing regulations and weak coordination with local governments in Dili.

In Bali, community participation in ecotourism activities is very high through the banjar system. Similarly, women's involvement in eco-lodge management in Bali shows a more significant level of participation compared to Branca, Timor-Leste. This condition shows that community-based social institutions play an important role in expanding the space for community participation, both in economic, social, and environmental management aspects.

These environmental benefits demonstrate the effectiveness of waste management in Bali through village-based waste banks. The program is considered successful in reducing plastic waste in

marine areas since the launch of the Tri Hita Karana initiative in 2023. Furthermore, field observations indicate that the construction of community-based artificial reefs can contribute to mitigating coastal erosion (Qodim, 2023). In contrast, Branca is facing a household waste crisis due to limited waste processing facilities. This situation has led to pollution in the bay area, driven primarily by the influx of seasonal tourists.

In Bali, cultural dynamics show that Tri Hita Karana has a spiritual function as a unifying factor in conservation practices. Traditional ceremonies such as Mejejah and Tumpek Wariga encourage people to work in harmony with nature and interpret nature as part of sacred space, including in the concept of Pura Dalem (Widiantana & Indrayani, 2023). In contrast, in Branca, although there are still coastal traditions, the process of commercialization of tourism has eroded the spiritual significance of local culture. This is reflected in the complaints of the local community that "tourists come only to take pictures, not to learn about the culture."

Conflicts of interest in Branca, especially between investors and fishermen, appear to be sharper than those in Bali, which are generally still within the internal scope of the community. Bali has shown independence through economic diversification, including the development of local handicrafts and agro-tourism. Instead, Branca still relies on foreign aid to support the development of ecotourism. The sustainability prospects of the ecotourism sector in Bali are expected to be stronger in the next decade, while Branca still faces concerns over ecosystem degradation. Therefore, the Balinese hybrid model, which combines a customary approach and a formal legal approach, can be recommended as a reference to be adapted in the development of ecotourism governance in Branca.

1. Environmental Law Implementation

Environmental law in Bali shows a more mature implementation through synergy between national environmental laws, regional regulations, and customary village awig-awig. Most informants in Bali understand that environmental regulations exist, both in the form of formal regulations and customary norms. Awig-awig is understood not only as a social rule, but also as an instrument of controlling community behavior in protecting the environment of tourist areas.

"In our village, this Penglipuran village awig awig is very complied with in protecting the environment around tourist attractions and in palemahan as a whole, because if the krama or the community here does not obey the awig-awig, there are customary sanctions, for example, it will not be served in relation to samasama braya or in relation to traditional activities"

(Balinese informant, traditional leader/ecotourism manager, I Made Duglut)

The quote shows that customary norms have an important position in strengthening people's compliance with environmental rules. In some cases, customary sanctions against waste management violations are considered more effective because they have moral, communal, and cultural dimensions. The informant also described awig-awig as a "living law" because it is closer to people's daily lives and responds faster to violations than formal legal mechanisms.

In contrast, in Branca, public understanding of environmental regulations is still limited. Some informants said that constitutional norms regarding environmental rights have not been fully translated into operational local policies. As a result, environmental regulations are often perceived as policies that are far from people's daily lives.

"I don't know the environmental rules that are related to tourist attractions I didn't finish high school, so I don't know much so that tourism is visited here a lot"

(Branca informant, coastal community, Simon Petrus)

These findings show that the main problem in Branca is not only the absence of legal norms, but also the weak translation of these norms into local institutional practices. The centralization of authority at a higher level of government means that local communities do not always have adequate space to be involved in environmental decision-making.

2. Community Participation in Ecotourism Management

Community participation in Bali is relatively stronger because it is supported by the banjar system and customary village deliberative forums. The majority considered that local deliberation plays an important role in setting limits on tourist visits, regulating the behavior of business actors, and resolving environmental conflicts. This deliberation mechanism makes the community feel that they have space to express their views and participate in determining the direction of ecotourism management.

"In the management of tourism in our place, the village often invites its residents to be involved in tourism development and is invited to be responsible for tourism activities in our village, the village also urges the involvement of women in helping the tourism industry in homes such as home stays, selling handicrafts and souvenirs for tourists"

(Balinese informant, banjar member/ecotourism actor, Ni Made Adriani)

Community involvement is also seen in economic activities that support ecotourism. Women began to be involved in the management of homestays, handicrafts, local culinary, and other tourism support activities. Although the level of women's involvement varies between regions, field findings show that ecotourism has opened up space for economic participation for groups of people who were previously less visible in tourism decision-making.

"I am in this place selling and selling services, I sell food and drinks for tourists, such as loloh cemcem (typical herbal medicine of Penglipuran village) and makeup services for Balinese traditional clothes, to add and help the family economy, yes it is enough for you"

(Balinese informant, women/local community business actor, Ni Luh Puspa)

In Branca, community participation still tends to be limited and not fully substantive. Decision-making in ecotourism development is more influenced by local elites, governments, or external actors. Some informants said that coastal communities have not always been involved since the planning stage, so that there is tension between conservation needs, economic interests, and community access to coastal space.

"I'm a small person who doesn't know, how tourism here will progress, I don't have anyone to direct how tourism activities here can progress, I want there to be assistance from the Timor Leste side to provide a way for the people here so that tourism can develop"

(Branca informant, coastal community, Lorenzo)

The quote is important to affirm that community participation in Branca cannot yet be called substantive participation. The community is indeed the party directly affected by the development of ecotourism, but it has not been fully placed as the main actor in the planning and decision-making process.

3. Environmental Sustainability in Ecotourism Practices

In terms of the environment, Bali shows more organized management practices through village waste banks, restrictions on tourism activities, and customary-based conservation activities. The informant described a decrease in plastic waste in several tourist locations after the community-based waste management program was implemented.

"In Bali, the waste problem is now in the spotlight because there is a plan to close the Suwung landfill in Denpasar, but outside Denpasar and Badung it can still be resolved. Organic waste is precisely the problem because inorganic waste has been processed and some have collected it to be used as recycling, and the government must immediately find a solution while maintaining the environment in tourist areas so that tourism remains sustainable."

(Bali informant, environmental manager/conservation activist, I Nyoman Sutama)

The Tri Hita Karana principle also strengthens people's awareness that nature is not just an economic object, but part of the spiritual and social order. In this context, conservation practices are understood not only as an administrative obligation, but also as a moral and cultural responsibility of the community.

On the other hand, Branca still faces the problem of household waste, coastal pollution, and coastal erosion. Most of the informants in Branca attributed the problem to limited sanitation facilities, weak supervision, and increasing seasonal tourism pressure.

"If there is a lot of garbage here, for waste from tourism there is still not so much but the government has not fully prevented related to environmental problems as a result of tourism activities, many buildings around the coast that disturb the coastal environment"

(Branca informant, environmental activist, Emilios dos Santos)

These conditions show that the development of ecotourism without strong environmental institutions risks accelerating the degradation of coastal ecosystems. In Branca's case, environmental issues are not only related to individual behavior, but also to limited infrastructure, weak supervision, and lack of strong integration between formal regulations and social practices of the community.

4. Comparison of Bali and Branca Findings

Comparatively, Bali shows a more integrated ecotourism governance model because of the relationship between formal regulations, customary law, local institutions, and community

participation. Meanwhile, Branca is still in the stage of strengthening basic institutions, especially in terms of regulatory socialization, community involvement, and the provision of environmental infrastructure.

These differences show that the effectiveness of environmental laws in ecotourism is not only determined by the existence of written rules, but also by the extent to which they are accepted, understood, and implemented by local communities. Bali shows that the integration of formal law with customary norms can strengthen compliance with the environment. Branca pointed out that regulations that are not connected to the social structure of society tend to be difficult to work effectively at the local level.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study show that the main problem in ecotourism governance does not solely lie in the existence or absence of environmental regulations, but in the ability of these regulations to work socially at the community level (Hanum, 2025). In this context, environmental law is not enough to be understood as a set of formal norms that are administrative, but needs to be seen as a regulatory system that gains effectiveness when it is able to interact with local values, community institutions, and community participation mechanisms (Dr. Rendi Susiswo Ismail, S.E., S.H., 2024). On this basis, this study offers a Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model as an analytical framework to explain how formal laws, local norms, and community participation can be integrated in sustainable ecotourism governance.

1. Structure of the Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model

The Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model is built on three main pillars. The first pillar is formal regulation, which is a state legal apparatus that provides a normative basis for environmental protection, control of space utilization, waste management, ecosystem conservation, and sustainable tourism development (Khater et al., 2025). Formal regulation is necessary because it provides legal legitimacy, minimum standards of environmental protection, and the basis for authority for the government to carry out supervision and law enforcement.

The second pillar is local norms or community values, which are the rules, customs, social practices, and cultural values that live in society (Daskon, 2010). In the Balinese context, this element is seen through awig-awig, the banjar system, and the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. However, in a hybrid model, local norms do not always have to be in the form of strongly codified customary laws (Bennett & Vermeulen, 1980). In areas such as Branca, local norms can be coastal traditions, community knowledge of marine spaces, mutual cooperation practices, informal rules on beach use, or collective values about the protection of coastal resources.

The third pillar is community institutional participation, namely, formal and informal spaces that allow communities to be involved in ecotourism planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation (Syamsiyah et al., 2025). This pillar is important because community-based ecotourism cannot run on a top-down approach alone. Local communities need to be placed as subjects of governance, not just beneficiaries or parties affected by tourism policies.

Table 3. Structure of the Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model

Model Components	Main Functions	Forms of Application
Formal regulation	Provide legal basis, environmental standards, and supervisory authority	Environmental laws, local regulations, tourism policies, coastal zoning rules
Local norms	Providing social legitimacy and cultural proximity	Awig-awig, coastal traditions, community agreements, mutual cooperation practices
Participatory institutions	Ensuring community involvement in decision-making	Village forums, ecotourism management groups, coastal committees, community deliberations
Supervision mechanism	Ensuring compliance with environmental standards	Social sanctions, community supervision, citizen reporting, coordination with the government

Sustainability instruments	Controlling the impact of ecotourism on the environment	Carrying capacity limits, waste management, coastal conservation, tourist education
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This model does not place state laws and local norms as two competing systems. On the contrary, the two are positioned as complementary elements. State law provides normative certainty and institutional authority, while local norms provide social acceptance and proximity to people's daily practices.

2. Institutional Prerequisites of Hybrid Models

In order for the Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model to work functionally, there are several institutional prerequisites that must be met. First, recognition of local institutions is needed. This recognition does not necessarily mean recognition of established customary institutions, such as in Bali (Marhaendra et al., 2018). In the context of coastal areas such as Branca, recognition can be given to fishermen's groups, coastal communities, women's groups, youth groups, or citizens' forums that have had a direct relationship with coastal resources.

Second, it is necessary to decentralize authority in a limited and measurable manner. The central government or local government retains regulatory and supervisory functions, but local communities need to be given space to regulate the technical aspects that are directly related to their lives (Offner, 2000). For example, regulating beach cleanliness, schedules for the use of tourist spaces, restrictions on activities that damage the ecosystem, waste management, and reporting mechanisms for environmental violations.

Third, this model requires the legal and ecological capacity of the community. Community participation will not be effective if the community does not understand the substance of environmental regulations, the risk of ecosystem damage, and their rights and obligations in ecotourism management. Therefore, environmental law education, waste management training, conservation literacy, and institutional capacity building are important requirements before the hybrid model is fully implemented.

Fourth, a coordination mechanism across actors is needed. Ecotourism involves many parties, such as the government, business actors, local communities, tourists, civil society organizations, academics, and indigenous or community actors (Duffy, 2006). Without coordination, ecotourism policies are easily fragmented. The hybrid model requires a coordinating forum that can bring together these various interests in one open and accountable decision-making mechanism.

Fifth, an environmental accountability system is needed. Hybrid models should not stop at cultural recognition or symbolic participation. It must have clear work indicators, such as waste reduction, coastal zone protection, increased citizen participation, business actor compliance, and sustainable economic benefits for local communities. With these indicators, hybrid models can be evaluated periodically.

3. Model Localization Process in the Branca Coastal Region

The application of the Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model in Branca cannot be done by directly copying the experience of Bali. Bali has a strong customary structure, while Branca faces challenges in the form of local institutions that are not as strong as Balinese traditional villages, limited community participation, and decision-making that tends to be centralistic. Therefore, the process of adopting the hybrid model in Branca must be carried out through gradual localization.

The first stage is the mapping of social norms and coastal practices that are already alive in the community (Anwar et al., 2025). Although Branca does not yet have traditional institutions as strong as Bali, it does not mean that its people do not have local norms. Traditions of using beach spaces, habits of guarding certain areas, social relations between coastal residents, joint work practices, and local knowledge about abrasion and marine seasons can be used as an initial basis for building ecotourism management norms.

The second stage is the establishment of a coastal community forum. This forum can serve as a local deliberation space involving coastal communities, small business actors, youth, women, local governments, and parties related to tourism management. The forum does not have to be in the form of a customary institution, but can be in the form of a coastal ecotourism management committee that has a clear mandate in planning, supervising, and resolving environmental problems.

The third stage is the codification of local agreements into community rules. Community agreements regarding waste management, the use of beach space, the protection of erosion-prone areas,

restrictions on certain tourist activities, and the obligations of business actors can be outlined in local guidelines. These guidelines can then be linked to local government policies to obtain a stronger institutional foundation.

The fourth stage is the integration of local rules with formal regulations. At this stage, the government plays an important role in ensuring that community agreements do not conflict with national law, people's rights, and environmental protection principles. This integration can be done through local regulations, administrative decisions, coastal management programs, or cooperation schemes between governments and communities.

The fifth stage is capacity building and periodic evaluation. Branca needs ongoing training on environmental law, waste management, coastal conservation, tourism governance, and community oversight. Periodic evaluations need to be conducted to assess whether the model implemented actually strengthens environmental protection and increases community participation, or simply creates new institutional structures without substantive changes.

4. The Function of Hybrid Models in Sustainable Ecotourism Management

The Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model has three main functions. First, this model serves as a normative bridge between state law and societal social practices. Many environmental regulations fail to work effectively because they are not translated into the social language that people understand. By incorporating local norms and community mechanisms, environmental laws become closer to the daily lives of citizens.

Second, this model functions as an instrument for democratizing ecotourism governance. Ecotourism is often developed in the name of conservation and economic growth, but local communities do not always gain enough space in the decision-making process (Scheyvens, 1999). The hybrid model requires that the community be involved from the planning stage, not just at the implementation or benefit receipt stage.

Third, this model serves as a mechanism to prevent environmental degradation. Local community involvement allows environmental monitoring to be carried out more quickly and closer to the location of the problem (Fascista, 2022). In coastal areas such as Branca, community monitoring can help detect early sewage problems, seasonal tourism pressures, coastal vegetation damage, and activities that accelerate erosion.

As such, this model is not only relevant for regions with strong customary laws such as Bali, but can also be applied in regions where local institutions are still developing. The condition is that the model is not imposed as a form of institutional transplantation, but is adjusted to existing social capacity, government structures, and local activities.

5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model expands the study of environmental law by placing legal effectiveness as the result of the interaction between formal regulation, social legitimacy, and community participation. This model shows that environmental law in the context of ecotourism can not only be analyzed from a normative aspect, but must also be seen from the way the law is received, translated, and implemented by local communities (Stanković et al., 2021).

In practical terms, this model provides policy direction for regions such as Branca to build more participatory ecotourism governance without having to have a customary structure identical to Bali. Strengthening can start from coastal community forums, the drafting of local rules based on citizens' agreement, recognition of coastal knowledge, and gradual integration into local government policies (Nugraha, 2024). With this approach, Branca can develop an ecotourism management model that is appropriate to its own social context, rather than simply adopting a formal Balinese model.

Based on this analysis, the success of sustainable ecotourism is highly dependent on the ability of a region to build functional relationships between law, community, and the environment (Baloch et al., 2023). Bali provides an example that the integration of formal law and local norms can strengthen ecotourism governance. However, for Branca, the most important lesson is not to imitate traditional Balinese institutional forms, but to build a hybrid mechanism that suits the coastal realities, institutional capacity, and needs of its own local communities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of ecotourism based on environmental laws in Bali and the Branca Area shows important differences in terms of regulatory effectiveness, community

participation, and environmental sustainability. These differences are influenced not only by the existence of formal rules, but especially by the ability of those rules to connect with local values, societal institutional structures, and social practices that live at the community level.

In the context of Bali, ecotourism governance is relatively stronger due to the integration between formal regulations, awig-awig, the banjar system, and the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. This integration makes environmental law not only present as an administrative rule, but also as a social and cultural norm that has legitimacy in the eyes of the community. As a result, community participation in ecotourism management, environmental monitoring, and local problem solving can run more effectively.

On the other hand, the Branca Area still faces quite fundamental institutional challenges. Centralization of decision-making, limited public understanding of environmental regulations, weak local participation forums, and suboptimal environmental management infrastructure make ecotourism development in this region more vulnerable to waste problems, coastal pollution, and coastal erosion. This condition shows that formal regulations that are not localized into the social practices of the community will be difficult to work effectively.

Theoretically, this study offers a Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model as a governance framework that integrates three main elements, namely formal regulation, local norms or values, and community institutional participation. This model is not intended to replace state law with customary law, but rather to bring together formal legal certainty with the social legitimacy of the community. Thus, environmental law can work closer to people's lives and be more responsive to ecological issues at the local level.

For coastal areas such as Branca that do not yet have customary institutions as strong as Bali, a hybrid model needs to be implemented through a gradual localization process. The process can start from mapping social norms and coastal practices, establishing community forums, drafting local agreements, integrating these agreements into government policies, and strengthening the legal and ecological capacity of communities. In this way, Branca does not need to formally imitate Balinese's customary structures, but can establish an ecotourism governance mechanism that is appropriate to its own local social, cultural, and institutional conditions.

Practically, this study recommends strengthening community-based ecotourism regulations, increasing the capacity of local governments and communities, recognition of local practices in environmental management, and the establishment of more substantive participation mechanisms. Cooperation between Indonesia and Timor-Leste is also important to be directed at the exchange of good practices, environmental law training, and strengthening sustainable ecotourism networks, especially in coastal areas facing tourism pressures and ecological vulnerabilities.

The study was limited geographically to Bali and Branca, so application to other ecotourism areas requires further validation. Its qualitative design did not provide measurable environmental or economic indicators, the six-month data-collection period may not have captured seasonal dynamics or longer-term policy change, and the 34-informant sample did not include large investors or international tourists who may also influence governance.

Further research could test the Hybrid Ecotourism Legal Model through longitudinal monitoring over three to five years, combine qualitative analysis with indicators such as ecosystem carrying capacity, community income, and regulatory compliance, and compare additional ASEAN cases. Research could also examine external actors such as investors, tourists, and international institutions and evaluate the implementation of the hybrid model in Branca after policy interventions to assess institutional change and concrete environmental effects.

This research opens up a wider discourse space on hybrid environmental law in the context of ecotourism in developing countries, as well as being the foundation for more contextual and sustainable policy development.

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