

The Moral Politics of Inclusion: Social Exclusion and Identity Transformation in Indonesian Community-Based Tourism

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Abstract. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is widely promoted in Indonesia as a participatory and empowering development strategy. However, the realities of inclusion and benefit distribution are often shaped by social hierarchies, customary norms, and moral evaluations. This study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach to examine how CBT participation produces both inclusion and exclusion, and how moral and social norms mediate the transformation of local identity. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analyses across multiple Indonesian CBT sites. The findings reveal that participation is governed not only by formal rules but also by informal gate-keeping, moral judgments, and social capital, resulting in differentiated access to economic and symbolic benefits. Excluded individuals often experience resentment, silence, and a shift in identity from “hosts” to marginalized subjects. By integrating the moral economy with critical tourism studies, this study advances a relational and politicized understanding of CBT. It moves beyond procedural models of participation to theorize CBT as a field of moral-political contestation, where the distribution of benefits is inseparable from struggles over legitimacy, social recognition, and the very definition of ‘community.’ This framework provides critical leverage for analyzing social exclusion and identity transformation in tourism development beyond the Indonesian context.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism; Social Exclusion; Moral Economy; Indonesia; Qualitative Research; Tourism Sociology

1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a dominant development strategy within Indonesia’s tourism policy framework. Promoted by government agencies, international donors, and non-governmental organizations, CBT is widely framed as a mechanism for poverty alleviation, community empowerment, and sustainable development, particularly in rural and peripheral regions. In the Indonesian context, CBT has been positioned as a corrective to mass tourism models that are often associated with environmental degradation and social displacement, offering instead a locally grounded and participatory alternative [1], [2], [3]

At the discursive level, CBT is constructed as a normative development project embedded in ideals of participation, empowerment and sustainability. Communities are portrayed as cohesive social units capable of collectively managing tourism resources and equitably sharing benefits. This framing resonates strongly with global development narratives that emphasize bottom-up governance, local ownership, and inclusive growth [4], [5], [6]. In Indonesia, these narratives are further reinforced through policy rhetoric that aligns CBT with village autonomy and community resilience under decentralization reforms [7], [8].

However, a growing body of critical scholarship highlights the persistent contradictions between CBT ideals and everyday social realities. Empirical studies increasingly show that CBT initiatives often reproduce internal inequalities, elite capture, and exclusionary practices within communities [9], [10], [11]. Rather than functioning as inclusive platforms, CBT arrangements may privilege individuals with greater social capital, political connections, or access to external networks while marginalizing poorer households, women, and socially peripheral groups. These contradictions call into question the assumption that “community” is a homogeneous and harmonious entity [12], [13].

Indonesia presents a particularly complex context for examining these tensions. Local social relations are deeply shaped by adat (customary institutions), patron–client networks, and layered governance structures resulting from political decentralization. While adat norms emphasize collective responsibility and moral obligations, they may also reinforce hierarchical authority and gatekeeping mechanisms in decision-making processes [14], [15], [16]. Simultaneously, decentralization has shifted significant power to village elites and local brokers, creating new opportunities for controlling tourism resources and benefits [17], [18], [19]. These socio-cultural and political dynamics make CBT in Indonesia not merely a technical development intervention but a morally and politically charged arena in which participation, entitlement, and legitimacy are continuously negotiated [20], [21].

Therefore, understanding CBT in Indonesia requires moving beyond celebratory narratives of empowerment to critically examine how social exclusion and moral claims are produced within community tourism practices. By situating CBT within Indonesia’s socio-cultural complexity, this study positions CBT as a site where development ideals intersect with existing power relations, moral economies and identity formations.

Despite the widespread implementation of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) across Indonesia, existing academic research is largely dominated by policy-oriented and success-driven perspectives. Much of the Indonesian CBT literature focuses on evaluating program effectiveness, community participation indicators, and economic outcomes, often closely aligning with government and donor agendas [20], [22], [23], [24]. While such studies have contributed valuable insights into best practices and institutional design, they tend to reproduce normative assumptions that CBT is inherently inclusive and empowering, leaving critical social dynamics under-explored.

Consequently, sociological attention to the processes of social exclusion, internal stratification, and moral conflict within CBT communities is in CBT. Existing studies often treat “the community” as a unified and consensual actor, obscuring how class, gender, kinship, and political affiliation shape differential access to tourism opportuni-

ties and benefits for different community members. Critical research in broader tourism and development studies suggests that CBT frequently generates new hierarchies and exclusions, particularly through elite capture and informal gatekeeping mechanisms [25]–[26]. However, these dynamics remain insufficiently examined in the Indonesian CBT context through in-depth sociological analysis.

Furthermore, moral economy perspectives are notably underutilized in Indonesian tourism research. While moral economy has been widely applied to understand conflicts between market forces and local norms in agrarian and development studies [27], its potential to illuminate how communities morally evaluate participation, entitlement, and fairness in tourism remains largely untapped. CBT initiatives are not only economic arrangements but also moral projects that invoke the values of solidarity, reciprocity, and collective benefit. Ignoring these moral dimensions limits our understanding of why certain exclusions are accepted, contested, or normalized within community tourism practices [28].

While critiques of CBT's internal inequalities exist [29], they are often descriptive or focus on economic capture. There is a paucity of work that systematically theorizes the social and moral mechanisms through which exclusion is produced, justified and internalized. Furthermore, the moral economy lens, while potent, has been under-deployed to analyze the symbolic and emotional injuries of exclusion—the transformation from 'host' to 'marginalized subject'. This study addresses these gaps by asking not only who is excluded but also how exclusion is socially enacted and morally legitimized and with what consequences for identity and social cohesion. Building on the identified research gaps, this study aims to advance a sociologically grounded understanding of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesia by foregrounding issues of social exclusion, moral evaluation and identity transformation. Rather than approaching CBT as a technical development instrument, this study conceptualizes it as a socially embedded and morally charged practice shaped by power relations, normative expectations, and contested claims of legitimacy.

The first objective of this study was to analyze how participation in CBT simultaneously produces inclusion and exclusion within Indonesian communities. While CBT initiatives are commonly framed as inclusive platforms for collective benefit, participation is often structured through formal and informal mechanisms that differentiate access to resources, decision making, and recognition. This study seeks to unpack how such mechanisms operate in practice and generate uneven social outcomes among community members.

The second objective is to examine CBT as a moral economy in which participation, benefit distribution, and authority are evaluated through locally grounded norms of fairness, obligation, and deservingness. By adopting a moral economy perspective, this study explores how community members interpret CBT not only in economic terms but also through moral judgments that legitimize or contest exclusionary practices. This perspective allows for a deeper understanding of how market-oriented tourism initiatives intersect with communal values, such as reciprocity, solidarity, and social harmony.

The third objective is to understand identity shifts from “hosts” to marginalized subjects within CBT structures. As tourism reorganizes social relations and redefines roles

within communities, some individuals experience a loss of recognition and dignity, transitioning from active cultural hosts to marginalized actors within local tourism economies. This study investigates how affected community members experience, narrate, and emotionally negotiate such identity transformations. Guided by these objectives, this study addresses the following research questions:

How is participation in Community-Based Tourism organized, regulated, and justified within Indonesian community contexts?

What social mechanisms and moral logics contribute to the inclusion and exclusion of CBT practices?

How do local actors experience and interpret identity transformation within CBT structures?

Critical CBT scholarship has shown that participation can be limited by elite capture, structural inequality, lack of information, and unequal control over tourism resources. However, the contribution of the present work is not the proof of the existence of exclusion. Instead, it maps an overlooked explanatory mechanism: the moral rationale for exclusion. The research investigates how material and political benefits are transformed into claims to entitlement that are locally legitimate, via assessments of contribution, loyalty, respectability, reciprocity and deservingness. It also links these processes of legitimation to symbolic harm and identity transformation. This study changes the analytical question from a simple “who governs resources?” to “how is such governance morally justified, contested, and internalized?” To understand CBT as a moral-political field, the parameters of legitimate participation and the definition of “the community” are constantly constructed.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Community-Based Tourism in Indonesia

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesia has evolved alongside broader shifts in national development paradigms and tourism governance. Initially influenced by alternative tourism and ecotourism movements in the 1990s, CBT gained formal recognition in Indonesian tourism policy in the post-Reformasi era, particularly after the implementation of political decentralization in the early 2000s. Decentralization repositioned local governments and village institutions as key actors in development planning, creating institutional space for CBT to be promoted as a locally grounded and participatory tourism model [30]

Within national tourism strategies, CBT has been framed as a mechanism for integrating tourism development with poverty reduction, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. Government initiatives, such as village tourism programs (*desa wisata*), have institutionalized CBT principles by encouraging communities to mobilize local cultural and natural assets as tourism attractions. These initiatives often rely on collaboration among village administrations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and external facilitators to build local capacity and connect communities to tourism markets [31]. Consequently, CBT in Indonesia has become deeply embedded

in policy discourses that emphasize empowerment, entrepreneurship, and community resilience.

Decentralization has significantly reshaped CBT governance, amplifying the roles of village institutions, NGOs, and local elites in structuring participation and benefit distribution. Village governments and customary authorities frequently act as gatekeepers, controlling access to tourism resources, funding, and the decision-making processes. NGOs and donor agencies often function as intermediaries, providing technical assistance while simultaneously introducing external norms and accountability. However, these arrangements can inadvertently reinforce existing power hierarchies, as local elites with greater political connections and social capital are better positioned to capture tourism benefits and represent the community to external actors [9], [32]

Empirical studies on Indonesian CBT have documented both positive outcomes and significant limitations of CBT. On the one hand, CBT has been shown to generate supplementary income, strengthen local pride, and enhance cultural visibility in certain contexts [33] [34]. However, a growing body of research highlights persistent challenges, including uneven benefit distribution, symbolic participation, and the exclusion of marginalized groups such as women, landless households, and socially peripheral residents [12], [35]. Many studies rely on program evaluations or stakeholder perspectives, offering limited insight into the lived experiences and moral evaluations of community members excluded from CBT benefits.

Taken together, the existing Indonesian CBT literature reveals a tension between normative policy aspirations and complex social realities. Although CBT is widely promoted as an inclusive development strategy, empirical research often under-theorizes internal community dynamics, moral conflict, and identity transformation. This limitation underscores the need for a more sociologically informed and qualitatively grounded analysis that situates CBT within Indonesia's specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts.

2.2 Social Exclusion and Intra-Community Inequality

Social exclusion has long been a central concern in sociological analyses of development, referring to the processes through which individuals or groups are systematically denied access to resources, participation, and recognition within social, economic, and political systems [36]. Unlike poverty, which is understood solely in material terms, social exclusion emphasizes the relational and structural dimensions of inequality, highlighting how power, norms, and institutional arrangements produce differentiated life chances. In tourism contexts, social exclusion manifests not only through unequal economic outcomes but also through restricted access to decision-making, symbolic recognition and social legitimacy.

Within community-based tourism (CBT), exclusion is often obscured by the normative assumption that communities are cohesive, egalitarian entities. Critical tourism scholars have challenged this assumption by demonstrating that communities are internally stratified along the lines of class, gender, ethnicity, kinship, and political affiliation [37]. These social hierarchies shape who is able to participate in tourism activities, who controls key resources such as land, capital, and networks, and who is recognized as a legitimate representative of the "community." Consequently, CBT initiatives fre-

quently privilege actors who already possess social, cultural, or political capital, reinforcing existing inequalities rather than mitigating them.

Power relations within communities play a decisive role in structuring access to tourism resources. Local elites, village leaders, and customary authorities often act as gatekeepers, mediating relationships with external stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, and investors. Through their positional power, these actors can selectively include or exclude community members from tourism benefits, often justifying such decisions through moral narratives of merit, loyalty, or communal contribution [14]. Marginalized groups, such as women, younger residents, landless households, and those lacking kinship ties to local elites, are more likely to be excluded or confined to low-value, labor-intensive roles within the tourism economy.

Thus, rather than functioning as a mechanism of collective upliftment, tourism can become a driver of internal differentiation within communities. The commodification of cultural and natural resources introduces market logic that rewards specific skills, assets, and forms of visibility, leading to new social distinctions and hierarchies [38]. Over time, these processes may reconfigure local power structures, producing both winners and losers within the same community. This dynamic challenges celebratory narratives of CBT by revealing how tourism development may intensify social fragmentation and moral tensions, rather than fostering social cohesion.

Therefore, understanding CBT through the lens of social exclusion and intra-community inequality requires a shift from outcome-focused evaluations to relational analyses of power and stratification. Such an approach foregrounds the everyday social processes through which participation is negotiated, boundaries are drawn, and inequalities are normalized or contested within community tourism practices.

2.3 Moral Economy and Tourism Development

The concept of the moral economy provides a powerful analytical lens for understanding how economic practices are embedded within moral norms, social expectations, and culturally specific notions of legitimacy. Classical formulations of moral economy, most notably, challenge the assumption that economic behavior is driven solely by rational market calculations. Instead, they emphasize how economic actions are evaluated against shared moral standards concerning fairness, obligation, and subsistence security [16]. In this sense, the moral economy highlights the normative boundaries that communities draw around acceptable and unacceptable economic conduct.

In development studies, societies are particularly influential, demonstrating how rural communities resist market forces that threaten the moral expectations of reciprocity and collective survival [39]. These insights are highly relevant to tourism development, especially in community-based tourism (CBT), where market-oriented activities are introduced into social contexts governed by enduring moral norms. CBT initiatives often invoke moral claims, such as collective benefit, shared responsibility, and community ownership, that resonate strongly with moral economy principles; however, their practical implementation frequently exposes tensions between these ideals and market realities.

In the Indonesian context, the moral economy is deeply intertwined with communal values rooted in adat (customary institutions) and practices of gotong royong (mutual cooperation). Adat norms define moral obligations, social hierarchies, and legitimate authority within communities, shaping expectations regarding resource use, leadership, and collective welfare [40]. Meanwhile, gotong royong embodies the ideals of reciprocity and shared labor, reinforcing the moral expectation that economic benefits—especially those derived from collective assets—should be distributed in socially just ways. These moral frameworks strongly influence community perceptions of tourism participation, entitlement, and exclusion. In critical tourism studies, the moral economy lens shifts attention from 'good governance' to 'legitimate governance' in the eyes of the community. This explains why ostensibly fair procedures can feel deeply unjust and why economic 'winners' may suffer social sanctions. This complements political economy critiques by illuminating the subjective, normative terrain upon which material inequalities are negotiated and either accepted or resisted [41]

This perspective complements, rather than replaces, critical tourism, governance, and political-economy approaches. Political-economy analysis identifies resource ownership, labor relations, material interests, and the concentration of tourism benefits. Governance analysis explains formal authority, institutional representation, accountability, and decision-making procedures. Critical CBT scholarship reveals structural constraints, elite capture, and unequal participation. Moral economy adds an explanation of the normative grammar through which these inequalities become acceptable or objectionable. It shows how power is converted into legitimate entitlement, how unequal arrangements are morally contested, and why exclusion may have consequences that extend beyond income loss to recognition, dignity, identity, and belonging.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study conceptualizes Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a moral-economic field, where economic practices, institutional arrangements, and moral evaluations intersect to structure participation, exclusion, and identity formation. Rather than viewing CBT as a neutral development intervention, the framework positions it as a socially embedded arena governed by formal rules, informal norms and contested claims of legitimacy. In this sense, CBT operates simultaneously as a site of economic production and moral judgment, where access to resources and recognition are continuously negotiated.

Drawing on moral economy theory [42] and sociological analyses of social exclusion [43], [44]. The framework emphasizes the interaction between institutional arrangements, social hierarchy, and moral evaluations. Institutional arrangements, including village regulations, CBT management structures, cooperative rules, and NGO-led participation mechanisms, define the formal conditions of inclusion. However, these arrangements are enacted within socially stratified communities shaped by class, gender, kinship, patron–client relations, and adat-based authority. As a result, participation in CBT is rarely equal or universal but is filtered through existing hierarchies that privilege certain actors over others.

Figure 1 synthesizes our conceptual framework, illustrating how CBT functions within the moral-political field. Formal and Informal Structures (outer layer) create the rules of the game. These are interpreted through Social Hierarchies & Moral Evaluations (mediating layer), which filter access. This process yields core outcomes: differentiated Patterns of Inclusion/Exclusion, which in turn produce Identity Transformations (e.g., from 'host' to 'marginalized subject'). This model posits that identity change is not a separate 'impact' but the embodied outcome of situated moral-political struggles within the CBT field.

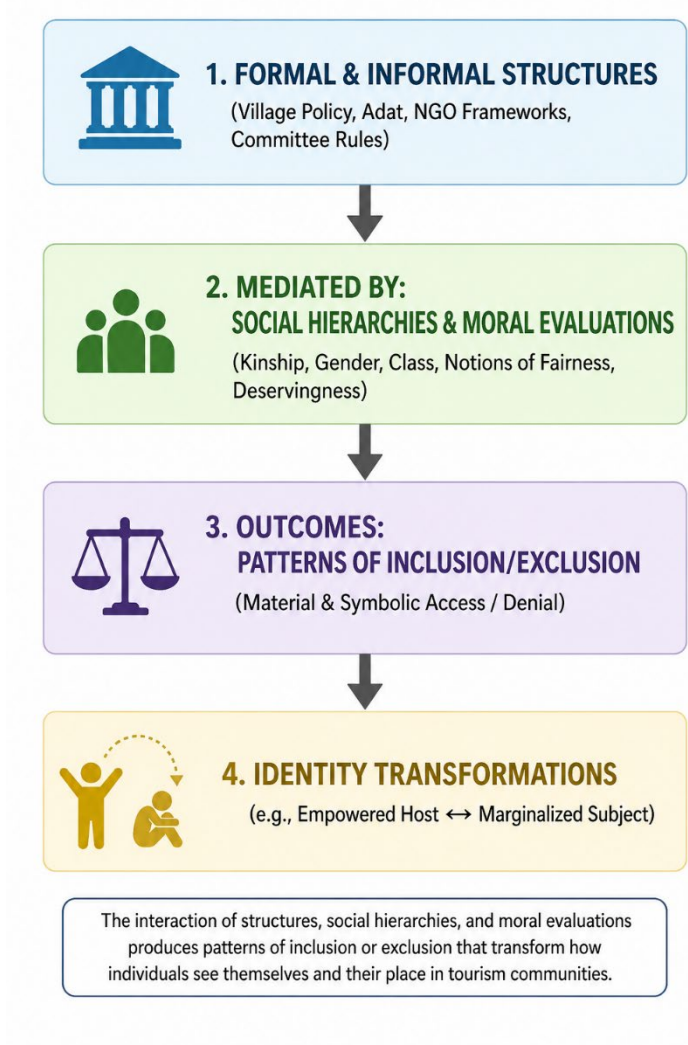


Fig. 1. The Tourism Field as a Relational Space of Power

3 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and critical research approach to examine social processes, moral reasoning, and identity transformations within Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesia. By prioritizing in-depth, context-sensitive inquiry, this approach enables the exploration of nuanced social dynamics that are often overlooked by quantitative or policy-evaluation studies. It is particularly suited for investigating phenomena such as social exclusion, moral contestation, and differentiated access to tourism resources, which are embedded in everyday interactions, local norms, and power hierarchies.

A case study design, or alternatively a comparative multi-site design, was employed to capture variation across different community contexts while maintaining a rich understanding of local specificity. The case study methodology allows for an intensive exploration of the lived experiences of actors, the moral and social logics underpinning CBT participation, and the institutional and cultural factors that shape inclusion and exclusion. Comparative multi-site analysis, including diverse village types (e.g., rural, cultural, and ecotourism sites), provides an opportunity to identify patterns and divergences across settings, enhancing analytical transferability and theoretical insight.

This design aligns with critical tourism scholarship that emphasizes the relational, moral, and socially constructed nature of tourism experiences, enabling the study to address questions about who benefits, who is marginalized, and why, within the broader moral-economic field of CBT.

The study focuses on Nglanggeran, Yogyakarta, and Panglipuran, Bali, which exemplify the diversity of community-based tourism initiatives in the country. Sites may include rural villages with cultural tourism programs, ecotourism-oriented communities, or locations where village-based tourism has been institutionalized through government-supported Desa Wisata initiatives. Each site was chosen to reflect variations in social structure, local governance, and tourism development history, facilitating a comparative understanding of inclusion and exclusion dynamics.

A detailed socio-historical background of each site is provided, encompassing the following:

1. Historical development of CBT: tracing the origins of tourism initiatives, involvement of government, NGOs, and local actors, and previous development interventions.
2. Socio-cultural context: including adat (customary laws), kinship networks, local hierarchies, and community norms (e.g., gotong royong, reciprocity).
3. Tourism infrastructure and market integration: examining accessibility, presence of tourism facilities, and linkages to external stakeholders, including investors and regional tourism boards.

This contextualization ensures that the study captures not only the observable patterns of inclusion and exclusion but also the underlying moral, social, and institutional logics that shape the lived experiences of community members in CBT.

Data for this study were collected using multiple qualitative methods to capture the complex social, moral, and institutional dimensions of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesia. A triangulated approach was employed to enhance credibility,

depth, and contextual richness by combining in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

3.1 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

This research employed a comparative qualitative case study method. The two cases compared are two famous CBT destinations in Indonesia namely Nglanggeran in Gunungkidul Special Region of Yogyakarta and Panglipuran in Bangli, Bali. Theoretical purposive sampling was employed to select cases based on their richness of information and known status as CBT destinations in varying institutional and cultural contexts. Nglanggeran is an example of a nature-based geotourism and education context with strong tourism committees, village organizations and collaborative endeavors. Panglipuran is a good example of a cultural heritage environment where spatial organization, ritual responsibility and authority based on adat are clearly articulated. Cases were chosen according to the maturity of CBT, existing community participation, identifiable mechanisms for benefit distribution, and sufficient diversity in tourism resources and local governance. The two sites are not intended to statistically represent the entire diversity of Indonesian CBT. Their comparative importance is to explain mechanisms that work in different governance structures.

A total of 72 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, 36 from each research site. We used a purposive maximum-variation sampling strategy to capture a broad spectrum of roles within the CBT system. The sample included 30 active CBT participants, 18 residents who were not involved in CBT or who reported experiences of marginalization, 13 village elites or customary leaders, five external facilitators, and six local government officials. Participants were selected based on their direct experiences with the governance of CBT, involvement in tourism, distribution of benefits, or the impacts of exclusion. The 18 marginalized participants comprised 25% of the interview sample, and their inclusion was strategic to deepen the analytical richness of the findings on exclusion. As a qualitative comparative study, the sample was not designed to be representative of the population or to enable statistical generalization.

Table 1. Interview Participants by Category and Site

Participant Category	Nglanggeran (Yogyakarta)	Panglipuran (Bali)	Total
CBT Participants (Active) <i>This includes homestay owners, guides, cultural performers, craft vendors, and cooperative members.</i>	14	16	30
Non-Participants / Marginalized Community Members <i>Includes residents formally or informally excluded from CBT benefits, including those in peripheral roles or without the necessary social capital.</i>	10	8	18

Village Elites & Customary (Adat) Leaders	6	7	13
<i>This group includes village heads (kepala desa), CBT committee chairs, and respected adat elders who act as gatekeepers.</i>			
External Facilitators	3	2	5
<i>Includes NGO officers and government tourism agency staff involved in CBT development and support.</i>			
Local Government Officials	3	3	6
<i>Includes sub-district (kecamatan) and village administrative staff relevant to tourism policy.</i>			
GRAND TOTAL	36	36	72

The interviews focused on experiences of participation, perceptions of fairness, moral reasoning regarding inclusion/exclusion, and identity negotiation within tourism structures. Probing questions addressed both the material and symbolic dimensions of participation, reflecting the study's moral-economic perspective.

3.2 Participant Observation

Social exclusion was operationalized as a multidimensional relational process instead of a dichotomous binary status. The analysis was conducted in five domains. Economic or material exclusion means limited access to tourism revenue, resources, employment, business opportunities and market channels. Procedural-political exclusion is about the denial of voice, representation, agenda-setting influence, and decision-making authority. Relational exclusion means being cut out of networks, information, referrals, and key gatekeepers. Spatial exclusion meant that residents were in close proximity to tourist pathways, tourist amenities and commercially attractive sites. Symbolic-cultural exclusion means the refusal to be acknowledged as a legitimate host, contributor or representative of the local culture. The dimensions were developed based on social exclusion and critical tourism literature, and then refined based on consistent patterns found in interviews, observations and documents. They were not quantified on numerical scales, but were differentiated by empirical indicators and substantiated by qualitative evidence.

The researcher engaged in participant observation in CBT activities, such as cultural performances, guided tours, and communal labor (*gotong royong*) related to tourism projects. The observation also extends to community decision-making forums, village meetings, and informal gatherings where tourism-related negotiations and discussions occur. This method provides insights into the following:

1. Everyday practices of inclusion and exclusion.
2. Informal social hierarchies and gatekeeping mechanisms.
3. Moral and symbolic evaluations of actors' participation in CBT.

Moral and material-interest codes were initially distinguished for analytical purposes and subsequently examined relationally. Interest-related codes captured control over tourism revenues, assets, positions, permits, contracts, and organizational influence.

Moral codes captured appeals to fairness, contribution, loyalty, reciprocity, respect, harmony, adat obligations, and deservingness, as well as sanctions involving shame, gossip, or loss of social recognition. The analysis did not categorize claims as either genuinely moral or merely self-interested. Instead, it examined how moral language mediated, legitimized, or contested material and political interests. Triangulation compared participants' stated justifications with observed practices, documentary rules, the consistency with which criteria were applied, and the distributional consequences of decisions. Moral narratives could therefore be sincerely held, strategically deployed, or perform both functions simultaneously.

Identity transformation was identified through convergence among four empirical indicators. First, changes in self-positioning were identified when participants shifted from describing themselves as part of a collective "we" toward describing themselves as outsiders, invisible residents, or individuals no longer recognized as hosts. Second, altered recognition by others was examined through the loss of invitations, public roles, decision-making authority, or acknowledgment. Third, behavioral changes included silence, withdrawal, refusal, and reduced participation in tourism or village activities. Fourth, affective-moral responses included resentment, shame, frustration, disillusionment, and a perceived loss of dignity. Narrative sequences were examined to determine whether these changes followed repeated experiences of exclusion rather than isolated dissatisfaction. Interview accounts were triangulated with observed interactions and practices of public recognition.

3.3 Document and Discourse Analysis

Relevant policy documents, village regulations, NGO reports, and promotional materials were collected and analyzed to understand the institutional and normative frameworks guiding CBT. This includes:

- Rules and criteria for participating in tourism initiatives.
- Representations of community identity, equity and empowerment in official narratives.
- Evidence of moral reasoning or justification for inclusion and exclusion practices.

Together, these methods enable a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of CBT as a socially and morally embedded field, highlighting both structural constraints and everyday moral negotiations. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents strengthens the validity of the findings while revealing divergences between policy ideals and lived experiences.

Data were analyzed using a combination of thematic and narrative analysis, guided by the theoretical lenses of moral economy [45], [46], and critical sociology of tourism [47], [48]. This approach allows the researcher to examine both patterns across cases (themes) and individual or collective stories (narratives) that reveal how social exclusion, moral reasoning, and identity transformation unfold in the context of CBT.

Coding and Analytical Categories were developed iteratively, combining deductive and inductive strategies.

1. Participation: forms of involvement, eligibility, and active engagement in CBT activities.
2. Exclusion criteria included instances of marginalization, barriers to access, and restricted influence.
3. Moral Claims and Legitimacy: Evaluations of Fairness, Deservingness, and Socially Sanctioned Authority.
4. Resentment and Silence: Emotional responses and acts of withdrawal or non-participation as forms of moral commentary.

The coding process was supported by the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti to systematically organize, cross-reference, and visualize the relationships among themes. Narrative analysis further highlights how community members interpret, negotiate, and articulate their experiences of inclusion and exclusion, capturing both explicit statements and subtle moral reasoning.

As an Indonesian researcher from an urban academic institution, my positionality afforded me both insight and potential bias. My outsider-insider status enabled rapport but may have led participants to align their narratives with perceived policy or academic expectations. A reflective journal documented these dynamics, and member checking was used not to seek consensus but to understand divergences in interpretation, treating discrepancies as further data on the politics of representation.

This study adheres to rigorous qualitative standards to ensure trustworthiness, including:

1. Credibility: Prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents, and member checking with participants to validate interpretations.
2. Dependability: Detailed documentation of the research processes, coding decisions, and analytical steps to allow for external audits and reproducibility.
3. Transferability: Rich, thick descriptions of contexts, participants, and social dynamics enabled readers to assess applicability to other CBT settings.

Ethical considerations are particularly critical, given the study's focus on internal community conflicts and power asymmetries. Measures include:

1. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.
2. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymization of sensitive information, especially regarding marginalized individuals or dissenting voices.
3. Minimizing harm by carefully navigating discussions of exclusion, conflict and moral critique.
4. Maintaining neutrality while acknowledging the researcher's positionality and potential influence on local perceptions.

By combining methodological rigor, theoretical grounding, and ethical sensitivity, this study aims to produce trustworthy, socially responsible, and theoretically insightful findings that illuminate the complex moral and social dynamics of CBT in Indonesian society.

4 Findings

4.1 The Intertwining of Adat, Bureaucracy, and Social Capital

Participation in Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesian villages is structured through a combination of formal and informal mechanisms, reflecting both institutional rules and sociocultural hierarchies. Formal mechanisms include village regulations (*peraturan desa*), CBT committee guidelines, and NGO or government-imposed eligibility criteria that define who can participate in tourism programs, manage resources, and represent the community in external negotiations. These mechanisms often stipulate membership, leadership roles, or contributions to communal tourism projects, creating a procedural framework for inclusion [49] [50].

However, formal rules are interpreted and enforced through informal social processes that significantly influence actual participation in sports. Local adat leaders, village authorities, and CBT committees play a central role in mediating access to tourism. Adat leaders, whose authority is grounded in customary law and social legitimacy, often act as gatekeepers, endorsing or restricting participation based on moral evaluations of trustworthiness, loyalty, and adherence to communal norms. Village authorities, particularly in decentralized governance contexts, control access to financial resources, permits, and official recognition, which can favor those with political connections or prior involvement in village governance. CBT committees, frequently composed of village elites or highly respected community members, further shape participation by allocating key responsibilities and directing collective projects [22], [51].

These overlapping formal and informal structures produce differentiated access patterns. Individuals who hold social, political, or cultural capital—such as lineage ties to adat leaders, prior engagement in community activities, or recognized skill sets—are more likely to secure high-value positions such as guides, managers, or hosts for cultural performances. Conversely, marginalized groups, including landless households, women without kinship support, and younger community members, often occupy peripheral roles or are altogether excluded from participation. In some cases, individuals are formally eligible but are effectively excluded through subtle social cues, moral judgments, or a lack of practical access to resources.

Participants frequently articulated their experiences using moral and social reasoning. For example, one resident explained the following:

“I could join the village tourism team, but the adat elders said I have not contributed enough to our communal work. Even if I want to help, they will not assign me a role. It is not just about rules—it is about trust and respect.”

This statement highlights the intersection of formal eligibility and moral legitimacy, illustrating how social hierarchies and customary norms shape participation. The findings indicate that CBT participation is not evenly distributed but rather mediated through a complex field of power, obligation, and recognition, in which moral and social evaluations are as important as institutional rules.

Overall, the structuring of participation reflects the dual nature of CBT as both an economic and moral field, where inclusion is granted not only on technical or economic criteria but also through alignment with local social hierarchies, moral norms, and in-

stitutional expectations. This has significant implications for understanding the patterns of social exclusion, agency, and identity negotiation in Indonesian CBT communities.

4.2 Moral Labeling, Spatial Marginality, and Bureaucratic Obfuscation

Social exclusion within Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesian villages is a complex, multi-dimensional process shaped by social, economic, and moral factors. While CBT initiatives are often promoted as inclusive, participation and access to benefits are unevenly distributed, producing differentiated outcomes for community members.

Exclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Gender – Women, particularly those without recognized adat or family authority, often face limited access to decision-making and revenue-generating activities, such as guiding tours or managing homestays. Traditional gender roles constrain participation in activities deemed “public” or “leadership-oriented.”
2. Class – Households with lower economic or social capital may lack the resources (e.g., transportation, materials for homestay or handicrafts) required for active participation, effectively excluding them from economic opportunities.
3. Kinship and Social Networks – Access is often mediated by kinship ties and patronage networks. Individuals outside dominant lineages or lacking close relationships with village authorities may be excluded from committees, tourism negotiations, and informal revenue-sharing.
4. Spatial Location – Residents living on the periphery of the village or away from tourism hotspots experience physical and symbolic marginalization, limiting their opportunities to engage with tourists or participate in tourism-related events.

Mechanisms of exclusion:

1. Gatekeeping – Village committees, adat leaders, and tourism facilitators act as gatekeepers and decide who can participate in tours, homestays, and community-led programs. These decisions are often influenced by loyalty, social standing, and the moral evaluation of individuals.
2. Moral Labeling – Excluded individuals may be morally labeled as “undeserving” or “selfish,” reflecting local norms of fairness, reciprocity, and contribution to communal labor (*gotong royong*). Moral judgments reinforce social hierarchies and legitimize exclusion.
3. Bureaucratic Barriers – Formal regulations, application procedures, and administrative requirements can unintentionally favor those with literacy, social connections, or familiarity with governance processes, further marginalizing less empowered residents.

Empirical evidence illustrates these dynamics in the following ways. One resident of Nglanggeran noted:

“Even though I helped prepare the trekking routes and guided tourists informally, I was never allowed to officially sell tickets or manage homestays. They stated that only those with village committee approval or family connections could participate. It feels unfair, but everyone agrees it is the ‘rule.’”

This narrative demonstrates that social exclusion is not accidental; it is structurally embedded, socially legitimized and morally reinforced. Thus, participation in CBT becomes a site where power, legitimacy, and moral evaluation intersect, producing both opportunities and constraints that shape community stratification.

Overall, this analysis underscores that understanding CBT requires attention not only to formal policies and economic benefits but also to the social, relational, and moral mechanisms that determine who is included or excluded from the program. Such insights are crucial for designing equitable and context-sensitive community tourism programs.

4.3 When Market Success Violates Communal Ethics

The moral economy of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesian villages shapes not only who participates but also how benefits, responsibilities, and recognition are morally assessed. Community members frequently evaluate tourism activities based on local notions of fairness, reciprocity, and collective benefit rather than purely economic or technical criteria. Participation is often justified—or contested—based on adherence to communal obligations, contributions to village labor (*gotong royong*), and alignment with social hierarchies and *adat* norms [7][10].

Local residents often perceive CBT success from a moral perspective. For example, those who receive financial benefits without having contributed to communal labor or social obligations are sometimes labeled morally undeserving, even if their participation aligns with formal regulations. Conversely, individuals who demonstrate a commitment to community welfare are recognized as legitimate beneficiaries, even when their economic contributions are modest. These moral evaluations are reinforced by both formal and informal mechanisms, including endorsement by *adat* leaders, community surveillance, and social sanctioning through gossip, exclusion, and moral critique [11][9].

However, the introduction of market logic and external tourism interventions generates tension between individual economic success and collective social obligations. Market-driven opportunities, such as private tours, souvenir production, or partnerships with external investors, reward individual initiative and skill, sometimes enabling participants to bypass communal obligations. This can create moral dissonance because local norms emphasize fairness, equitable sharing, and social cohesion. Such tensions often provoke debate, resentment, and moral negotiation within the community, highlighting that CBT is not only an economic field but also a moral arena in which legitimacy, reputation, and social recognition are continuously negotiated.

Narrative evidence illustrates these dynamics in the following way. One participant noted:

“Even though I earned more than others by selling handicrafts to tourists, some villagers said that I was taking more than my share. They said I should have shared my earnings with those who help in other ways, like cleaning or preparing the ceremonies.”

This example demonstrates how market performance alone does not guarantee moral legitimacy and how moral economy norms influence perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and social standing.

Overall, the moral economy framework reveals that CBT participation and exclusion are not merely structural or economic phenomena but are deeply intertwined with ethical and social evaluations. Understanding these moral dimensions is essential for explaining both patterns of inclusion and the emergence of marginalized subjects in community-based tourism.

4.4 The Emotional and Identity Costs of Symbolic Exclusion

The dynamics of participation, exclusion, and moral evaluation in Community-Based Tourism (CBT) produce profound shifts in local self-perception and social identity. While communities are often envisioned in policy discourse as cohesive “hosts” collectively benefiting from tourism, residents lived experiences reveal a more complex, stratified reality. Actors who are formally eligible to participate but are socially marginalized often experience a redefinition of their social role, from recognized community hosts to marginalized subjects within the tourism field.

This transformation occurs through both symbolic and emotional processes in the brain. Symbolically, exclusion manifests as diminished recognition, restricted access to decision-making, and moral critique from peers and leaders. Individuals may no longer be acknowledged as legitimate contributors, even when their labor or skills are essential for CBT activities. Emotional responses include resentment, frustration, and moral disillusionment, reflecting the tension between the communal norms of fairness and the market-driven inequalities introduced by tourism. Some participants also adopted silence or withdrawal as a coping strategy, signaling both resistance and resignation in response to perceived injustice.

For example, one marginalized resident recounted the following:

“I helped prepare the cultural performances every week, yet I was never allowed to sell tickets or souvenirs. The elders say that it is for those who have more experience or are related to them. I feel invisible, like my efforts do not count.”

This narrative illustrates how the moral economy and social hierarchies intersect to shape identity. Participation is not only a matter of economic engagement but also of social recognition and moral legitimacy. Those excluded from these symbolic structures experience an erosion of identity as “hosts” and are reconstituted as marginalized subjects, highlighting that tourism development can reproduce internal community inequality.

Furthermore, these identity transformations are relational; they are produced and reinforced through interactions with other community members, local authorities, and external stakeholders, and they reflect broader structural and moral dynamics. The shift from empowered participants to marginalized subjects underscores the interplay between economic opportunity, social capital, and moral judgment. It also demonstrates that CBT, while celebrated as participatory and inclusive, can generate new forms of social stratification and moral tensions within communities.

In summary, this section emphasizes that the social consequences of CBT extend beyond material benefits. The transformation of identity—from “hosts” to marginalized subjects—captures the emotional, moral, and symbolic dimensions of tourism partici-

pation, revealing the complex human experiences of inclusion, exclusion, and social negotiation in Indonesian CBT communities.

5 Discussion

5.1 Re-thinking Community-Based Tourism as a Moral-Political Project

This study argues that CBT should be re-theorized as a technology of social differentiation as much as it is a tool for development. It does not merely reflect pre-existing hierarchies but actively reconfigures them through new value criteria (e.g., tourism savvy, connectivity). The 'moral-political project' of CBT involves disciplining community members into subjects who fit both market logics and localized moral orders, creating new winners and losers.

CBT initiatives, often framed as participatory and empowering, inherently involve asymmetrical power relations. Village authorities, adat leaders, and CBT committees function as gatekeepers, mediating access to opportunities, resources, and their recognition. These actors exercise both symbolic power—shaping perceptions of legitimacy and deservingness—and institutional power—controlling financial and organizational resources of the shelter. Consequently, tourism participation becomes a political act, where compliance, alliance-building, and moral alignment influence who benefits and who is marginalized [5].

Moreover, CBT should be understood as a morally contested space where market imperatives clash with community norms and ethical expectations. Economic success in tourism, while desirable, may provoke moral critique and social friction if it is perceived as violating the principles of fairness, reciprocity, or collective obligation. These moral tensions illuminate why some community members are excluded or pushed to the margins despite formal eligibility. The concept of a moral economy thus provides a critical lens for understanding the interplay between economic activity, social recognition, and ethical judgment in CBT [10][11].

Reframing CBT as a moral-political project has several implications: it emphasizes that community tourism is not merely a technical intervention but a field of power, legitimacy, and ethical negotiation; highlights the relational and context-bound nature of agency; and underscores the importance of attending to emotional, moral, and symbolic dimensions alongside material outcomes. In practice, this perspective challenges development practitioners and policymakers to consider who defines fairness, how legitimacy is assessed, and how power is exercised in CBT settings, moving beyond narrow indicators of participation and economic performance.

5.2 Rethinking Social Inclusion in CBT

The analysis of Indonesian Community-Based Tourism (CBT) highlights that conventional inclusion discourse often fails to address underlying structural inequalities. Policy frameworks and development narratives typically emphasize participation, empowerment, and skill-building as mechanisms of social inclusion. However, these approaches assume that formal eligibility or procedural participation automatically trans-

lates into equitable benefits. The empirical evidence from this study challenges this assumption, showing that inclusion is mediated by social hierarchies, moral evaluations, and access to symbolic and cultural capital.

Structural inequalities in CBT manifest along multiple axes, including gender, class, kinship, and spatial location. Individuals and households with limited social connections, weaker kinship ties, or marginal landholdings are systematically disadvantaged, despite formal inclusion policies. For instance, women without recognized adat status or younger community members may be formally allowed to participate in tourism initiatives but are excluded in practice through gatekeeping by village elites, moral labeling, and bureaucratic barriers. These mechanisms produce a gap between inclusion rhetoric and lived experience, demonstrating that participation alone cannot redress deeply embedded social hierarchies [9].

From a theoretical perspective, these findings call for critical rethinking of inclusion in tourism and development studies. Social inclusion should be understood not merely as a quantitative indicator—such as the number of participants—but as a relational and morally embedded process shaped by power, legitimacy, and recognition. Moral economy concepts illuminate how community norms, obligations, and judgments of fairness mediate access to resources and social standing, producing both inclusion and marginalization simultaneously. Recognizing these dynamics allows scholars and practitioners to move beyond technocratic models of participation, acknowledging that inclusion is neither automatic nor evenly distributed, but socially and morally negotiated.

Practically, rethinking inclusion in CBT entails attention to equity in decision-making, transparency in resource allocation, and culturally sensitive engagement that addresses both visible and hidden inequalities. Development interventions should aim to identify and mitigate structural barriers, while also respecting local moral and social norms. Such an approach emphasizes relational justice, ensuring that participation is meaningful and that marginalized voices are recognized within community tourism governance.

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to tourism sociology by integrating moral economy perspectives with empirical insights from Indonesian Community-Based Tourism (CBT). First, it advances moral economy as a lens for understanding tourism not merely as an economic or participatory activity, but as a socially and morally embedded field. By highlighting how local norms, ethical obligations, and legitimacy claims shape access, participation, and exclusion, the study demonstrates that tourism practices are evaluated through both material and moral criteria, extending the conceptual scope of tourism research beyond conventional impact- or outcome-oriented approaches.

Second, the study contextualizes social exclusion within the Global South tourism literature, showing that inequalities in CBT are structurally and culturally mediated rather than merely incidental. In the Indonesian context, factors such as adat institutions, kinship networks, gender norms, and decentralized governance intersect to produce differentiated access to resources and symbolic recognition. By situating social exclusion

as a relational and morally negotiated process, the research provides a more nuanced understanding of the social consequences of tourism development, particularly in emerging destinations where formal policies coexist with deeply entrenched local hierarchies

Finally, the study contributes methodologically by demonstrating the utility of qualitative, interpretive approaches for capturing the interplay between moral evaluation, agency, and identity. Coding and analyzing narratives for moral claims, legitimacy, resentment, and silence reveals dimensions of social inclusion and marginalization that quantitative or policy-focused approaches often overlook. This approach underscores the importance of context-sensitive, theory-driven qualitative research in examining tourism as a contested and morally charged field.

The theoretical contributions of this study bridge moral economy theory and tourism sociology, providing conceptual tools for analyzing how social hierarchies, moral judgments, and local norms shape inclusion, exclusion, and identity in community-based tourism, with implications for research across diverse Global South contexts.

The comparison shows that in Indonesia, the nature of customary authority cannot be put in one box as a form of governance. In Panglipuran the traditional institutions had clear demarcations in managing cultural representation, social responsibilities, spatial arrangement and the authority of representatives articulating the interests of the village. In Nglanggeran, endorsement and legitimacy came from tourism committees, village organizations, civic standing, and recognized participation in community endeavors. The differences indicate that exclusion is not just the result of adat. The extent of concentration of interpretive authority, transparency in decision making, representation of different social groups and presence of appeal mechanisms can determine whether customary and administrative institutions serve to facilitate collective coordination or to perpetuate exclusion.

Inclusive CBT requires institutional safeguards that attend both to formal protocols and informal gatekeeping mechanisms. CBT bodies should publish the criteria for eligibility, selection, rotation and removal for tourism positions and provide documented justifications for their decisions, requiring declarations of conflict of interest from those making the decisions. Secondly, diverse representation in the governing bodies should comprise active tourism stakeholders, non-participating stakeholders, women and youth, economically disadvantaged households and residents outside tourism hubs. Where local hierarchies prevent open participation, independent facilitation may be needed. Third, benefit-sharing agreements should be based on publicly approved formulas that recognize direct tourism services, collective maintenance work, cultural labour, and contributions to a community development fund. Financial reports, social audits, rotation systems, and open tendering are required due to limited commercial opportunities. Fourth, independent confidential grievance and appeal mechanisms should be established, with protection against retaliation, stigmatization and moral labeling. Finally, regular inclusion audits should examine the material, procedural, relational, spatial and symbolic dimensions of participation. Such measures do not require the abrogation of adat or local custom. They require clear interpretation, diverse representation, justification and significant opportunities for evaluation.

6 Conclusion

This study highlights Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Indonesia as a complex site of moral contestation and social differentiation. While CBT is often promoted as an inclusive and participatory development strategy, empirical findings reveal that access, participation, and benefit distribution are mediated by social hierarchies, customary norms (*adat*), and moral evaluations. Inclusion is neither automatic nor evenly distributed; individuals with social, cultural, or kinship capital are more likely to secure central roles, whereas marginalized actors experience exclusion, moral critique, and symbolic invisibility.

The research also demonstrates that CBT operates as a moral economy in which legitimacy and fairness are socially negotiated and embedded in local norms and collective obligations. Market-driven opportunities can exacerbate inequalities and provoke moral tensions, resulting in an identity shift from recognized “hosts” to marginalized subjects. By integrating moral economy perspectives, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how power, morality, and social recognition shape participation, exclusion, and identity in community-based tourism.

Many findings are context-dependent. The institutional expressions of *adat*, the cultural norm of *gotong royong*, village decentralization, and Indonesia’s *desa wisata* policy framework should not be assumed to work in the same ways in other contexts. The theoretically translatable elements are mechanisms, not specific institutions: formal participation rules are mediated through informal gatekeeping; material and political interests are articulated and contested through moral frames; substantive inclusion involves resources, voice, networks, spatial access and recognition; and persistent exclusion may redefine identity and belonging. The propositions support analytical rather than statistical generalization and suggest further comparative analysis in other CBT and community resource contexts.

The findings have several implications for practice and policy in community tourism development.

1. **Rethinking Participation and Benefit-Sharing:** Policymakers, NGOs, and CBT facilitators should design mechanisms that go beyond formal inclusion criteria to address structural inequalities, hidden social hierarchies, and moral legitimacy. Equitable benefit-sharing must consider both material and symbolic recognitions.
2. **Governance and Local Engagement:** Village authorities and CBT committees should ensure transparent and accountable decision-making by integrating marginalized voices in planning and implementation. Recognizing informal power dynamics and moral norms is crucial for sustaining community cohesion and legitimacy.
3. **Capacity Building and Awareness:** Training programs and community workshops should emphasize the relational and moral dimensions of participation, fostering awareness of fairness, reciprocity, and collective responsibility, alongside technical tourism skills.

A key limitation is the focus on the experiences of exclusion; future research could ethnographically trace the discursive strategies and moral justifications used by gate-

keepers to legitimize their authority. Furthermore, a comparative study of CBT sites in contexts with weaker adat structures (e.g., post-conflict or migrant communities) could further disentangle the role of culture from the political economy. Finally, applying this moral-political field framework to other community-based resource governance (e.g., forestry and fishing) could reveal broader patterns at the intersection of marketization, local morality, and social stratification.

7 References

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