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Michael Rudolfus Sawu  
*Udayana University*, sawu.2281011041@student.unud.ac.id

Muhammad Ridla  
*Udayana University*, ridla.2281011004@student.unud.ac.id

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### Corresponding Author

Michael Rudolfus Sawu, Cristo Re Polytechnic, Maumere Study Program of Ecotourism Jl.Gang Pasa Tenpo, Denpasar, Bali, 80111

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# Tourist Engagement Model of Regenerative Tourism Destinations: A Case Study of Egon Buluk Tourism Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province

Michael Rudolfus Sawu<sup>1</sup> and Muhammad Ridla<sup>2</sup>

Study Program of Ecotourism  
Udayana University, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>sawu.2281011041@student.unud.ac.id

Tourism Faculty  
Udayana University, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>ridla.2281011004@student.unud.ac.id

## Abstract

The research aims to analyze regenerative tourism components products, tourists' perceptions, tourists' experiences, and regenerative tourism development policies while involving tourists as co-creators. The research utilizes a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 27 stakeholders related to the tourist engagement model in the development of tourism destinations at the village scale. This research found that the development of regenerative tourism product components showcases uniqueness and beauty on a massive scale due to being situated in conservation areas. However, there is a need for improvement in other components to provide a sense of safety, comfort, and enjoyment for visiting tourists. Tourists' perception of tourism products in regenerative tourism destinations is highly positive. As a result, tourists can experience eudaimonic tourism. However, tourists' behavior is not environmentally friendly, so it needs to be strengthened with policies for regenerative tourism management. One of them is involving tourists in the development of regenerative tourism. The research contributes a new conceptual framework to the development of regenerative tourism by involving tourists as co-creators in regenerative tourism.

**Keywords:** tourist experience, tourist perception, tourist as co-creator, regenerative tourism development, tourism village

## Introduction

Regenerative tourism is a process of transforming mindsets, destination systems, and practices. Regenerative tourism focuses on sustainable environmental practices, local community involvement, environmental justice, conservation, and the development of tourist areas. Therefore, regenerative tourism can be considered a future-oriented approach to tourism development, emphasizing the sustainability and resilience of tourism destinations themselves. Regenerative tourism is defined by Teruel (2018) as an emergent, evolutionary, and dynamic understanding that places sustainability within the framework of living systems and emphasizes

the relationship of man with himself, with others, and with the earth; in this context, the visitor is invited to slow down and create an experience that activates positive and deep connections between themselves, the place, the local community (the other), and the systems that support life there, thereby bringing them into harmony with the natural rhythms.

Egon Buluk Tourism Village has a diverse range of ecotourism products in its management. Some of these tourism products include the Egon Forest area, the Meang Miak waterfall, and the hiking trail to Mount Egon. The authenticity of these ecotourism attractions is remarkably high due to Egon Village's location within a conservation area and its pristine environment. The development approach places the local community at the center of tourism development. The goal is to raise awareness and promote social and ecological justice in tourism development (tourism restoration). This viewpoint is consistent with earlier research that links it to regenerative tourism, with an emphasis on changing the industry beyond sustainable and ethical travel rather than just revitalizing or restoring it (Zaman et al., 2022).

The system thinking about regenerative tourism destinations has been implemented in the Egon tourist village. The intended abstract thinking system aims to rejuvenate people, places, and nature in tourism development. Essentially, regenerating a tourism destination is not an easy task. It involves a system of change, mindset shifts, and practical implementation. Regenerative tourism destinations represent a visionary form of long-term tourism development. Achieving this vision requires collective awareness among stakeholders to give back to tourism what has been taken from it over the years. This approach is only successful if local agents and decision-makers are totally dedicated to a local development plan that takes the requirements of the host community into account and keeps tourist expansion at a sustainable level (Hui et al., 2023).

There is a need for a shift towards ecological social awareness and collective-based thinking that fosters care, empathy, and collaborative action. Tourism should be managed through a complex adaptive system to address the challenges of individualism, reductionism, separation, and commercialization associated with scientific thinking. Regenerative tourism requires a bottom-up, place-based approach centered around local communities and the environment. Essentially, this approach seeks to build collective awareness among stakeholders to create social and ecological justice in regenerative tourism destinations. In order to promote the long-term renewal and growth of social-ecological systems, regenerative tourism aims to make sure that travel and tourism reinvest in people, places, and nature (Dredge., 2022).

The development of regenerative tourism in Egon Buluk tourism village has lacked significant involvement from the tourists as the important actors in promoting the growth of regenerative tourism destinations in the area. Additionally, due to the low awareness of tourists, it has an impact on the ecosystem's health in regenerative tourism destinations. Consequently, there is a profound lack of collective awareness regarding social and ecological justice. This issue demands serious attention if the realization of regenerative tourism destinations in the future is to be achieved. Governments and scholarly groups have only lately begun to take an interest in the concept of regenerative tourism because of the persistent efforts of visionary leaders and practitioners (Pollock, 2019).

Regenerative tourism destinations have become a target for travelers as they always provide memorable experiences for tourists. The tourists' experience is a crucial aspect of the tourism

phenomenon. This, of course, is closely related to the content of tourism, which consists of novelty, uniqueness, and beauty offered at the sought-after tourism destinations. The tourists' experiences represent an essential product in the tourism industry. Travelers' preferences in choosing tourism destinations are not only based on motivations but also their previous travel experiences. According to Tung et al. (2011), experience is one of the best indicators of a visitor's behavioral intention and has a significant impact on creating memories, which is the main objective of tourism professionals (Tsai, 2016).

In the context of regenerative tourism destinations, tourists are expected to have a pro-environment mindset. Their activities are expected to reflect environmentally responsible behavior during their travels. This is intended to facilitate the realization of a transition towards regenerative tourism destinations. The success of such regenerative tourism destinations is expected to provide memorable experiences for tourists. Tung et al. (2011) describe a tourist experience as a person's subjective assessment of their lived (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) experiences associated with their travels, including those that occur prior to, during, and following the trip.

Based on preliminary research conducted by the researcher, it was found that tourists visiting the regenerative tourism destination in the Egon village face difficulties in accessing information about regenerative tourism destinations due to inadequate management. Tourists visiting the area still exhibit behaviors that do not reflect ecological awareness. This is mainly attributed to the lack of advocacy from the destination's management regarding regenerative tourism. Therefore, the researcher argues that active advocacy for tourists is necessary to achieve the goals of regenerative tourism development itself. Based on the issues outlined above, the researcher formulates the research problem as follows:

- How are the components of regenerative tourism products in Egon Buluk Tourism Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?
- How do tourists perceive the development of regenerative tourism destinations in Egon Buluk Tourism Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?
- How to engage tourists in regenerative tourism to provide memorable experiences when visiting Egon Buluk Tourism Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?

## Literature Review

### *Regenerative Tourism*

By integrating tourism practices into ecological processes and local communities, regenerative tourism advances innovations in tourism while improving the well-being of both humans and non-human animals (Bellato & Cheer, 2021). Regenerative tourism is a specialized industry that aims to enhance and transform the social-ecological systems where tourism activities are practiced. It has evolved from a lengthy conceptual lineage pulling from Indigenous viewpoints, pieces of knowledge, and Western science (Hes & Coenen, 2018).

In order to make tourism more meaningful, regenerative tourism places a special emphasis on the need to create healing opportunities for tourist destinations, balance the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism transformation, address the crisis of climate change and the

depletion of resources on Earth, and reduce and manage the environmental impacts of tourism (Bradley, 2021; Cave & Dredge, 2020; Duxbury et al., 2020).

### ***Tourism Experience***

Husein et al. (2018) state that an experience is personal, a reaction to a trigger, and typically the outcome of an individual's active involvement in a tourism activity. Experiences are categorized as logical and affective reactions to tourism attractions that can affect visitors' intentions for future behavior (Suhartanto et al., 2020). However, Gohary et al. (2020) contend that visitors have psychological and social responses to tourist attractions. Thus, it is important to view the tourism experience as a dual, subjective, and symbolic element that influences visitors' happiness with their trip and evokes their emotions (Kastenholz et al., 2018). Three primary elements comprise the tourism experience: the desire to travel, the actual experience itself, and the assessment of the experience.

The necessity to travel, the actual experience itself, and its appraisal make up the three primary parts of the tourism experience. In turn, there are two elements that make up the need to travel; the motivation behind it and the significance it holds (Staffieri, 2016). Put differently, a tourist's interpretation of his or her experience is influenced not only by personal traits but also by the social structure from which he or she comes and the relationships he or she has built with others (Blumer, 1969, Staffieri, 2016). Travel is given this frame of meaning, which is created by interactions with people and is identifiable to all those involved in its creation.

### ***Tourist Perception***

The goals, mindsets, and perspectives of travelers have a big impact on the destination selection process. The process by which people select, arrange, and interpret inputs into meaningful and cohesive visuals is known as perception (Lamb et al., 2014). By arranging and interpreting sensory perceptions, people provide meaning to their surroundings through the process of perception (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). Solomon (2002) similarly characterizes perception as the process of choosing, arranging, and interpreting bodily stimuli, such as sights, sounds, and odors. A stimulus can be given significance by the final interpretation. The same goods and services may not always be perceived the same way by visitors to a destination.

### ***Tourist as Co-Creator***

Through co-creation, users can take part in activities, investigate their surroundings, and communicate with other players (Eraqi, 2011). Co-creation creates an experience that people will remember, one that is subjective and personal and leaves a lasting impression (Zimmerman & Kelley, 2010). It has a favorable impact on visitors' intentions to return (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Zhang et al., 2018). As a result, behavior intention has been examined from the standpoint of producing co-creation experiences (Chathoth et al., 2016). Im and Qu (2017) suggest that customers' knowledge, motivation, and self-efficacy serve as the antecedents of co-creation, while value, satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and repurchase behavior are the results. Terblanche (2014) pointed out that a social systems approach, service logic, science of service, and cultural and economic viewpoints are some of the theoretical foundations of co-creation.

## Methods

### *Site Research*

This research was conducted in the Egon Buluk tourist village, Waigete District, Sikka Regency. This tourist village is one of the representations of regenerative tourism development in the terrestrial conservation area. The local community actively participates as both subjects and objects in regenerative tourism development. However, awareness regarding regenerative tourism destination development is still very minimal. The behavior of tourists visiting these places still shows little concern for local environmental ethics. Therefore, many tourist destinations still face environmental issues due to tourists' visits, such as scattered trash.

### *Design of Research and Approach*

This research utilizes a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. In-depth interviews were conducted with 27 stakeholders related to the tourist engagement model in the development of tourism destinations at the village scale. The purpose of the in-depth interviews is to explore tourists' experiences and perceptions of tourist destinations, aiming to involve them as co-creators. The interview questions' design is closely related to tourists' experiences and perceptions of regenerative tourism destination development. The scope of this research includes regenerative tourism products, pro-environmental behavior by tourists, policies for regenerative tourism destination development, and tourist involvement as co-creators. Data collection is carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review.

### *Participants*

Referring to the explanation above, the stakeholders interviewed are the local community, tourists, local government, academics, and the tourism industry. The local community referred to here includes the tourism-aware groups and local tourism entrepreneurs. The interviewed tourists are those engaging in tourism activities in the tourism village of Egon Buluk. The local government involved in this matter is the Tourism and Culture Office of Sikka Regency. The academics mentioned are those engaged in the development of regenerative tourism destinations, specifically from the Cristo Rey Polytechnic College. The selection of these stakeholders as informants is based on the criteria of their involvement in the development of regenerative tourism in the tourism village of Egon Buluk. The informants are contacted through face-to-face meetings and partly through online communication. The researcher can attach codes to the informants to differentiate them, as follows.

**Table 1.** Participants of Regenerative Tourism Development

Type	<i>n</i>	Code	Type of Stakeholders	Internal (I)	External (E)
Local Communities	5	LC	Small Tourism Enterprise		I
Tourists	20	T	Millennial Tourist		E
Regional Government	1	RG	Tourism and Cultural Office of Sikka Regency		E
Academia	1	A	Higher Education of Cristo Rey Polytechnic		E

### ***Interview Process and Guide***

This research was conducted from August 1, 2023, to October 1, 2023. The researcher conducted interviews with informants both face-to-face and online.

### ***Analysis***

The analysis method used in this research is qualitative thematic. The reason for choosing this method is to provide space for researchers to identify, organize, analyze, and propose patterns of relationships between themes. In this case, it is related to the tourist engagement model as co-creators in the development of regenerative tourism in the Egon Buluk Tourist Village.

### ***Findings***

#### ***Regenerative Tourism Components Products in Egon Buluk Tourism Village***

The development of regenerative tourism aims to create a tourist destination that serves as an educational hub for all stakeholders. The transfer of knowledge is highly anticipated to develop the tourism destination, provided that sustainability values are met, thus making it a prototype for future tourism. The study by Tham and Sharma (2023) highlights that the goal of regenerative tourism is not for it to spread over the globe. Rather, it functions as a basis for harmonizing established objectives and is predicated on heterogeneous teams acting with accountability; the results have to be consistently seen in both space and time. In this context, local communities are essential actors and development targets, and their participation in regenerative tourism development is crucial. The local community is a key element that must drive the development of owned tourism destinations to generate social implications. The paradigm of regenerative tourism catalyzes changing the development of tourism destinations to achieve sustainable development goals. Therefore, the development of regenerative tourism product components is crucial to realizing a regenerative tourist destination with high competitiveness. The components of regenerative tourism products form the foundation for creating regenerative tourism activities in a tourist destination. Researchers can attach the components of regenerative tourism products in Egon Buluk Tourist Village as follows.

**Table 2.** Components of Regenerative Tourism Products in Egon Buluk Tourism Village

<b>Tourism Components Product</b>	<b>Type of Tourism Product</b>	<b>Manager</b>
Attraction	Hiking	Local Communities
	Protected Forest Egon Ilimedo	
	Meang Miak Waterfall	
	Natural Hot Springs Blidit	
Accessibility	The Footpath to Every Tourist Attraction	Local Communities
Amenities	Restroom For Tourist	Local Communities
	Toilet For Tourist	
	Warung (Small Local Restaurant)	
Ancillary	Tourism Awareness Group	Local Communities

The development of the regenerative tourism product components involves the local community as the center of its development. The existence of this regenerative tourism product is very natural, especially in terms of tourist attractions. Considering that Egon Buluk tourism village is in a conservation area (Natural Tourism Park), its management is block-based. Egon Buluk Tourism Village is situated in a block that can be developed by the local community, especially in regenerative tourism, to provide prosperity for the people. However, other basic components of tourism still need serious attention from relevant stakeholders to enhance its competitiveness. The goal is to provide an impressive holiday experience by offering differentiated tourism products for visiting tourists. The existing conditions indicate that the development of regenerative tourism lacks an effective and efficient development plan. The current development is only practical in nature. The study carried out by Dredge (2022) investigates the mentality shift, system modifications, and range of realistic boundaries required to make the move to a regenerative strategy in tourism. It takes tangible techniques to shift perspectives and make the shift to a regenerative paradigm. Researchers can attach interview results with academics as follows:

So far, the development of the Egon Buluk tourist village does not yet have a mature plan. No academic studies have been conducted at all to form an effective and efficient development system. This underscores the importance of collaboration with universities in the future. This will greatly determine sustainable development in the future. (Academician)

### ***Tourist Perceptions and Experience Regarding the Development of Regenerative Tourism Destinations in Egon Buluk Tourism Village***

The development of regenerative tourism destinations holds strong appeal in the contemporary tourism market. It is evident that Egon village has managed to attract a massive influx of tourists. Based on the analysis conducted by the researcher, it is apparent that there is a significant influence of tourism products on tourists' experiences and the management policies on tourists' experiences. These social realities are assessed through reviews by tourists on social media platforms. Both of these influences contribute to tourists' intention to revisit Egon village. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize the development of regenerative tourism destinations. Researchers can attach the results of interviews with a group of millennial tourists engaged in tourism activities in the Egon Buluk Tourist Village as follows.

In terms of attractions, the appeal of this tourism destination possesses unique and extraordinary beauty. We see it as significantly different from other tourist attractions in Sikka Regency. It is a Natural Park, so its contents are very impressive. We all really love it. It will provide an unforgettable experience for us. This makes it very likely for us to come and visit again. (Tourists)

However, based on the field data related to tourism products, it is evident that considerable improvements are needed to provide comfort to tourists and to restore the existence of these tourism products. The goal is to instill a pro-environmental mindset among tourists and provide education to them. The researcher considers this to be an effective and efficient method for developing regenerative tourism destinations. The reason is that regenerative tourism destinations can only be achieved through the collaboration of various stakeholders in the tourism industry. A conceptual framework comprising five design elements and seven practical guidelines was established by (Bellato et al., 2023) based on assessments of the theoretical and practical aspects of regenerative tourism as well as practitioner consultations. For tourist



stakeholders working toward a regenerative future, this conceptual framework offers helpful advice. Researchers can attach the results of interviews with tourists regarding this matter as follows.

The natural beauty here is truly extraordinary, but the behavior of tourists visiting needs attention. You can see for yourself that there is a lot of litter around this area. This is a conservation area, so environmental conservation should be emphasized. Tourists should contribute to this. Additionally, the development of tourism facilities also needs to be improved. The existing facilities are still insufficient to meet our needs when visiting here. (Tourist)

In the context of management policies, the researcher found several shortcomings, such as a lack of information on the code of conduct for tourists. Yet, the development of regenerative tourism destinations in Egon Buluk village is located within a protected forest conservation area. Therefore, the provision of theoretical information regarding guidelines for responsible behavior in conservation areas becomes obligatory. This is expected to cultivate a culture of environmental responsibility among tourists when traveling to any destination. Researchers can attach the results of interviews with the local community —tourism village managers, as follows:

This is indeed a conservation area. However, there is currently no established code of conduct for visitors who come here. Many tourists exhibit environmentally unfriendly behavior simply because they are not aware of conservation practices. In the future, this is crucial, so we will work on developing a code of conduct. (Tourists)

The implementation of Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability in the regenerative tourism destination of Egon tourism village still appears to be minimal. The maintenance of facilities at each tourist attraction has not been optimal. Many facilities are left neglected, and some are still usable but not hygienic. This issue requires serious attention from the government and the local community for improvement. Additionally, environmental sustainability is a cause for concern, particularly regarding the waste problem that is not adequately addressed by both the local community and tourists. Thus, the principles of regenerative tourism should be advocated for all stakeholders, both directly and indirectly involved in tourism. The researcher can attach the results of interviews with the local government as follows.

Explicitly, indeed, this regenerative tourism development policy still has many shortcomings. There are still many things that need to be improved in the arrangement of its development system. Issues related to the lack of environmentally friendly behavior will be closely monitored in the future. Collaboration among stakeholders is crucial. We want many tourists to visit, but they must exhibit environmentally friendly behavior. This is essential in this regenerative tourism. (Government)

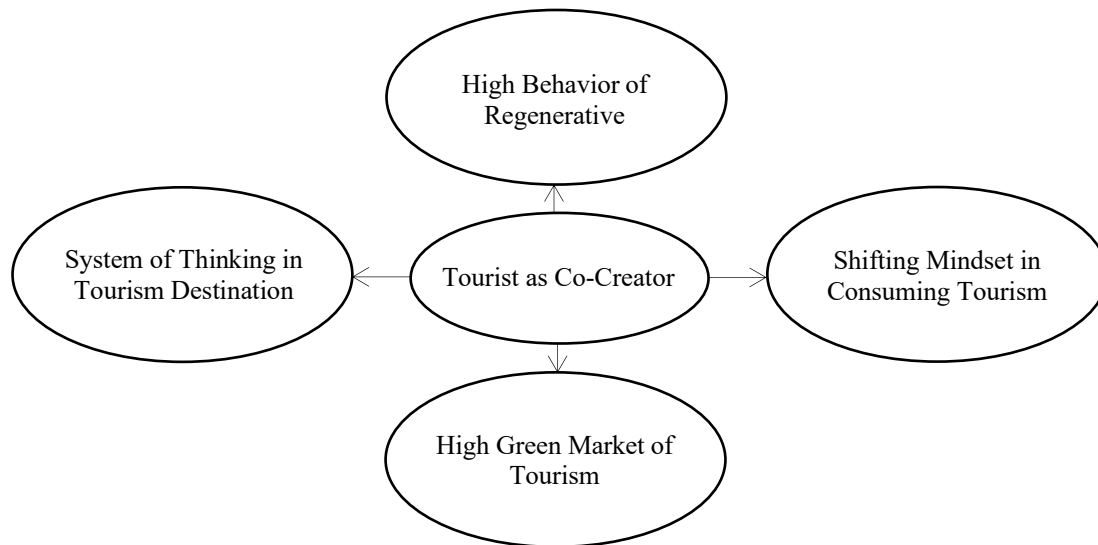
## Discussion

### ***Tourist Involvement Model in Regenerative Tourism Destinations in Egon Buluk Tourism Village***

Tourists play a crucial role in the development of regenerative tourism and should be engaged as co-creators. The involvement of tourists as co-creators is a vital strategy in the development of regenerative tourism destinations to meet personalized demands and gain competitive advantages. According to Berrada (2017), this involves business strategy, past customer experiences, and interactive relationships. In the researcher's view, involving tourists in the

development of regenerative tourism will have a significantly positive impact, as most of the pressure on tourist destinations is caused by the presence of tourists. The researcher aims to present a model of tourist involvement as co-creators in regenerative tourism as follows –Figure 1:

**Figure 1.** Tourist Involvement Model in Regenerative Tourism Destinations in Egon Buluk Tourism Village



When involving tourists as co-creators in the development of regenerative tourism, a massive transformation can be achieved in destinations. According to the researcher, the pressure on destinations caused by the presence of tourists, which is extrapolated in sustainable thinking through regeneration, will affect four fundamental aspects of regenerative tourism projects. These include the mindset of tourists, a shift in tourists' perspectives, the regenerative behavior of tourists, and the creation of a sustainable market of tourists through social media campaigns. Based on the researcher's observations, the tourist village of Egon Buluk has not yet embraced this paradigm. Therefore, it is essential to study and consider it in the future for the sake of the future of regenerative tourism. The research conducted by Gerke et al. (2023) mandates entrepreneurs to disrupt the status quo and do something differently, such as tapping into social networks for financial resources, altering discourse and mindsets, and ultimately fostering innovation and transformative change. The implications of this paradigm shift for operators in the tourism and hospitality sector need to be prioritized in future tourism research.

## Conclusions

The development of tourism product components is always based on art by destination. The presence of these tourism product components has its own uniqueness and beauty as they are located within the Natural Tourism Park Area. However, improvements are needed in other components to support tourist activities during their visit. This is because other components are still minimal, affecting the sense of safety, comfort, and enjoyment for tourists during their activities. Therefore, the involvement of relevant stakeholders is crucial to address this issue. Most tourists have a positive perception when visiting the regenerative tourism destination in the Egon Buluk tourism village. This is because the Egon Buluk tourism village possesses

uniqueness, beauty, and high value from its regenerative tourism products. Many tourists did not have pro-environmental in visiting this tourist village. However, in terms of tourism production components and management policies, a massive transformation is needed due to the presence of many shortcomings in embracing regenerative tourism.

According to the researcher, this will play a crucial role in the sustainability of the regenerative tourism destination in the Egon Buluk tourism village in the future. The key to achieving success in regenerative tourism lies in the transformation of the management system. Involving tourists as co-creators is vital in achieving a massive transformation in regenerative tourism. The researcher argues this because tourists are central phenomena in tourism itself, necessitating changes from within the tourist community. Currently, the context of regenerative tourism development in the Egon Buluk tourism village does not yet involve tourists as co-creators. Therefore, the researcher hopes that this idea can be implemented because of the effort to achieve regenerative tourism itself.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

This research can provide a foundation for developing a tourist engagement model that can be adopted by other regenerative tourism destinations. Its theoretical implications can inform practitioners and decision-makers on methods to enhance tourist participation in supporting regenerative tourism development. The study highlights the importance of increasing socio-ecological awareness among tourists. This perspective refers to how tourists' experiences can influence their attitudes and behaviors towards the environment. This theory can be used to design strategies for enhancing awareness and engagement of tourists in regenerative tourism practices in tourist villages.

### ***Practical Implications***

The practical implications of this research are to provide valuable guidance for tourism practitioners and decision-makers in designing and implementing strategies to enhance tourist participation. The goal is to generate a better approach to managing regenerative tourism destinations. The proposed theory in the research can be applied to design practical strategies to increase awareness and engagement of tourists in tourism villages. This may include activities such as educational programs or participatory initiatives that encourage tourists to contribute to the sustainability of the destination.

### ***Limitation and Future Research***

The research does not adequately consider the influence of external variables such as changes in government policies, shifts in global economic conditions, or other factors that can affect the sustainability of regenerative tourism destinations. Future research agendas need to integrate approaches from various disciplines such as ecology, anthropology, and economics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions among tourists, the environment, and local communities. Additionally, research comparing various regenerative tourism destinations can enhance understanding of the effectiveness of tourist engagement models and sustainability development strategies.

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