

## In Exploring Local Community Empowerment and Participation in Blue Tourism Activities

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**Abstract :** Empowerment suggests participation is working collaboratively towards shared objectives, obtaining resources and critically analysing one's social and political differences are all necessary steps in the empowering process. The aim of leadership empowerment is to give a team the resources and encouragement they need to work more productively together. This study explores potential ways to increase local empowerment and participation in blue tourism activities in an urban coastal context in South Africa. Blue tourism, which refers to the application of sustainability practices to tourism activities in coastal and marine settings, has the potential to significantly improve socioeconomic conditions in coastal communities. However, people's engagement in these activities remain restricted. The study uses a constructivist research paradigm and employs a qualitative method, conducting semi-structured interviews with community members from three different communities gaining in-depth perspectives from them. The study's goal is to identify impediments and potential for community participation in blue tourism, as well as offering practical solutions for promoting long-term and inclusive participation. Initial key findings highlight critical barriers to participation, emphasising the importance of skills development, policy alignment with local needs, and public-private partnerships as key components of community empowerment. This study offers policymakers and stakeholders recommendations for promoting inclusive blue tourism initiatives. The recommended initiatives emphasise the significance of skills development, infrastructure investment, and sustainable tourism models in ensuring economic empowerment and environmental conservation in urban coastal communities in developing states.

**Keywords :** blue tourism, community empowerment and participation, sustainable tourism models, inclusive participation

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