

**Tourism Development: A Case Study for Scuba Dive Tourism in Indonesia**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper investigates tourism as a form of development and explores the histories and previous research of tourism and development in Indonesia. Specifically, it treats Puffer Dive (“Puffer”), a private entity in North Sulawesi, as the object of analysis in the case study. The case analysis utilizes tourism development theory, previous research, anthropological theory, and business insights to in turn inform business strategy, specifically internal staff development, public-private partnerships, and marketing content for Puffer. At the point of time when this paper was being written, Puffer began undergoing significant internal development that positions them to a higher-end exclusive market. By situating Puffer in the context of tourism development, this paper expands the conversation on what third-party intervention in tourism development looks like, identifying ways in which Puffer can increase their revenue while also beginning to co-create and increase their impact on the community and local environment. The recommendations are grounded in theories of culture and culture contact, sustainability through public-private partnerships and community visioning, and a focus on pilgrimage towards frontiers. The recommendations advise changes to their internal practice and external marketing and will be sent to Puffer as suggestions that connect them to their founding mission ideals through ongoing development.

## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis is submitted for completion of a degree in “Tourism and Development Studies”, an independently designed major (IDM) at Colorado College. The style, organization, and narrative of the paper precariously balances a variety of discourses, primarily tourism development, business, and anthropology. Especially due to its relation to development, this research is tied up in a variety of discourses, particularly ones around global politics, cross-cultural communication, economics, social inequality, identity, ecology, globalization, and sustainability, as an initial list (Leite & Swain, 2015, p.1). The two main objectives of combining these various discourses are (1) to push forward work and theory around tourism development, and (2) to provide a differentiated model for private consulting. The research here will be used to treat Puffer Dive (“Puffer”) as a case study, identifying ways in which they can increase revenue, but also contribute to the people, land, and in turn the greater community.<sup>1</sup> The “precariousness” described here feels appropriate for a number of reasons. The first being that this paper is submitted for review in my own unique undergraduate department-of-one. In many ways it reflects four years of a liberal arts education, and a department that combined anthropology and economics-business courses. It features enthusiasm for ecology and creative management from my time travelling and studying in Belize and Scotland. It reflects a four-year course load stretching over a dozen departments, and the curiosity and desire to merge disciplines that has carried me through that.

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<sup>1</sup> For data confidentiality purposes, Puffer Dive is the pseudonym for the actual dive resort in question here. All data and analysis connected to them has been anonymized, utilizing pseudonyms and careful omission. The pseudonym “Puffer” was inspired by my best first semester of college in Central America which included breakups, food poisoning, and my terrible Spanish. At the end of the trip, it felt like a dream come true to be on a small island off the coast of Belize, where I went snorkeling for the first time. I remember very distinctly diving down to a reef and seeing a very nice pufferfish hiding in the middle of a coral structure. He had large beady eyes and stared back at me for quite a while. While unafraid, he also seemed sad and gentle. I remember being very touched and comforted by that encounter.

The second reason for the precariousness is COVID-19, which ruined most opportunities to travel and interact directly with others as a form of research. So, while I would have loved to travel to Indonesia and Puffer Dive, this thesis is my own sort of virtual visit. Just as I would have if this project was done in-person, I focus in on the practices, strategies, and communications of Puffer Dive, and ground them in the wider context and discourse of tourism development. What is lost in rich ethnographic work through in-person conversation with staff and tourists' lived experiences is somewhat salvaged by the internal notes of observations by Puffer management. There was a conscious choice to immerse myself, even remotely, in their day-to-day visions and operations. With the data they provided, it was possible to conduct either an in-depth data analysis or deep theoretical investigation of the practices, but these did not feel appropriate for the freshness and change-oriented solutions that a case study in this field ought to accomplish. By breaking this thesis out of specific departmental shells and orienting it as a pragmatic consulting-focused case study, this thesis will investigate private data, place it in the discourse of development, and attempt to make some change in the tourism industry. Puffer will receive a report that includes all of the recommendations laid out in this paper with the intent that the recommendations alter parts of their strategy and contribute to the surrounding community.

The final and most crucial reason for the precariousness is that this paper reaches, grasps, and searches for solutions to making tourism development more equitable and sustainable. It utilizes Abram's (2010) framework for change, that a hybrid actor working with text and technology for a discipline "might play a crucial role in the reordering of existing tourism assemblages" (p. 238). As a third-party actor, I have the capability and privilege to step back from both Puffer and their surrounding communities, working to identify strategies that could support both of them. I take inspiration from MacCannell (2011), writing "We are all equal

before the attraction...no one is so poor as to be precluded from sightseeing” (p. 5). For me, sightseeing is a form of taking a stance on development—a reckoning with the scene in front of someone, and a decision on how to engage. If no one is so poor to be excluded from sightseeing, then anyone should have the capacity to have a stance, and then a say in development. I am of course an outsider to the local communities I implicate in this study but believe that enough evidence-based understanding is reached to suggest alternatives to the situation of development as it stands there right now. The key objective of this paper is a hope that tourism development can contribute to communities, and that development as a whole may start to include more diverse voices. Though use of first-person language is limited, the paper is irreversibly tied up with my personal instincts and desires. The case analysis is biased to my perceptions and work experience from consulting projects. The narrative of the paper, weaving through tourism, development, business, and anthropology is a latent wish to inject more inclusive, sustainable, and generally interesting principles to the world of business. Flying through concepts, sometimes just taking an aerial snapshot, is my naïve way of trying to innovate a business analysis and create new frameworks that can be elaborated in my own practice down the road.

Thinking about my own practice down the road is part of the process that drove me to the research question. In my own day-to-day work, I’m concerned with the evolving field and notion of social impact, which in some circumstances refers to scaling both profitability and scaling community benefit. To me, social impact is a workaround solution that does its best to resolve the tension between increasing private profits and creating equitable impact. While private profit and equitable impact generally stand in contradiction with another, work in social impact recognizes that private profit will always be an interest and identifies some means in which it can still generate social impact through programs and investment. I was especially curious to take my

interest in social impact to the realm of tourism development, where discourses around capital explicitly include social, cultural, and environmental capital.

I write this paper with a love and hunger for travel, and a complex fear of development. Time and place are important influences too, as I write this in the fall and winter months of 2020, during COVID-19, as the world continuously ponders what reopening and rebuilding might look like in the aftermath. I have also been living in Colorado Springs, at a point in time where I am able to watch a little city begin to undergo development that does not seem sustainable in the long term. As Colorado Springs gentrifies with new developments, and begins to rebuild in a post-COVID economy, what will it look like? These are things I watched and worried about as this thesis came together and was comforted by knowing that I was not the only person asking interrogative questions about the development surrounding me. As I was revising, the *Colorado Springs Independent* titled their weekly headline article “Price of Progress: Land trust sells off housing for the poor to finance new complex, and not everyone is cheering”, detailing how development disproportionately affects residents through land management (Zubeck, 2021).

As I wondered ways in which my own practices and models could be used to affect change in local development and tourism development, I got introduced to Puffer Dive through a dear friend. As I have never been to Puffer Dive or even Indonesia, my stakes and bias in looking for solutions seemed simpler in the model of being a hybrid actor. I'm of the opinion that development, especially tourism development is intrinsically political and inherently personal. Analyzing Puffer Dive in Indonesia was the best remedy for distancing the political and personal in order to identify useful and adaptable frameworks for thinking about change in tourism development. The distance, though a limitation of the study, simplified the number of stakeholders as well. I will soon complicate and expand on my definition of tourism and its

stakeholders, but for Puffer, it really came down to maximizing benefit for three parties: the profitability of Puffer, the socio-environmental benefits of the surrounding community, and the experience of the tourists. For the case study presented below, and circumstances more personal to me, I needed to start thinking about dynamic solutions that can appease a number of parties.

I'd like to thank the Puffer Dive Team for their willingness both to provide data, and to listen earnestly to the recommendations that come from it. This thesis would not have been possible without the over-the-top encouragement, support, and patience of my two advisors, Dr. Kat Miller-Stevens from the Economics and Business Department, and Dr. Sarah Hautzinger from the Anthropology Department. Their advice and guidance in and out of the classroom has allowed me to thrive abroad, explore a variety of subjects, and come into myself in Colorado Springs. In many unseen ways, they are crucially responsible for the vision of "hope and goodness" that this paper brings to tourism development. I will always be grateful.

With all that said, let's dive in.

## INTRODUCTION

Our bags are packed, and we are headed to North Sulawesi, a province in Indonesia. Archaeological research has suggested that there has been human life in this region for tens of thousands of years, with an extensive history of various ethnic groups present and often in conflict. The prominent group that persists today are the Minahasan people. Minahasa, a term once used locally to refer to the region, comes from a myth and etymology for ethnic unification between various tribes in the area (Lundström-Burghoorn, 1981). The Minahasa are known for their music, colorful and rhythmic dance, and noticeably spicy food (Gangga, 2019). Today, many sub-ethnic groups still persist under the Minahasa nomenclature, to include the Ponosaken, Pasan, Batnik, Tonsawang, Tontemboan, Toulour, Tonsea and the Tombulu. The latter five of these groups are also the names of five distinct languages spoken in the region, and there also exists a regional and oral language locally called Bahasa Manado (Wikipedia, 2020). The official language of the region is Indonesian, though many of the local variants still persist, as well as Dutch.

The geography of Northern Sulawesi is mountainous and volcanic, and its position on the equator and shorelines creates a moist tropical climate. This climate allows for agriculture production, which was and still is one of the main occupations of Indonesia. The capacity for and diversity of agricultural production made Indonesia an ideal location for European colonial interests, drawn to crops like rice, coffee, and sugarcane (Britannica, 2012). The Portuguese arrived in North Sulawesi the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, shortly followed by the Spanish and Dutch. The Dutch would secure their presence in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, establishing military and trade outposts throughout the region (Britannica, 2012). There was a close and at-times strife-ridden relationship between Indonesians and the Dutch during this colonial period. Many values and



goods were exchanged, and Dutch influence on the region of North Sulawesi is specifically attributed to the ongoing presence of mass education, Christianity, and the Dutch language (Wikipedia, 2020). Indonesia would be briefly occupied by the Japanese during the second World War, mobilizing the country to declare its own independence in 1945. The Netherlands would recognize this independence in 1949, though the Minahasan peoples of Northern Sulawesi were still wary of ongoing control by other entities, including those in the southern part of Indonesia. In 1957, Northern Sulawesi became an autonomous state within Indonesia.

The critical conflict in Indonesia during World War II was between the Dutch and the Japanese. The Indonesians, caught in the middle on their own land, often had to choose sides. One Indonesian doctor serving the Dutch ended up treating a Japanese officer—and when the war tensions accelerated, this doctor became an enemy of the Japanese state. In a wartime act of kindness, the Japanese officer would end up saving the life of the doctor, allowing the doctor to go on living and raising his family. The doctor's children would grow up and continue to address issues facing their communities after the war. This would include improving access to medicine and health education, but they also discovered a love of diving. Decades after the war, they came together and founded the Puffer Dive resorts. They built Puffer from the ground up and continued to address local issues that mattered to them by ensuring that Puffer created jobs and focused on conservation efforts. Today, Puffer manages two locations, hereafter referred to as Goby and Platax. Goby, while physically closer to larger hubs, gives the aura of a small village lined with black sand beaches. Platax, features white sandy beaches, and its location provides plenty of seclusion from the surrounding areas.

The narrative of Puffer's founding presents a seemingly simple success story of a dive resort dedicated to family values, local communities, and ecosystem sustainability. However,

with decades of continued development, increased dive resort competition, and the many conflicts inherent with tourism development, it can be hard to uphold the historic vision for the two properties. As this paper is being written, Puffer is renovating their dive resorts in order to establish their properties as boutique resorts in a high-end market. This will of course change their internal practices and outbound communications. This coincidental alignment of timelines will allow me to consult not just how to reach said higher-end market through growing the business but identify ways in which to grow they can continue to align their strategies with some of these founding values.

Rather than simply addressing Puffer with a business analysis focused on mission drift, the discussion on Puffer will expand under the wider lens of tourism and tourism development. Tourism as a field of research is broad, utilizing a variety of disciplines and frameworks for analysis. This paper positions tourism in the field of development studies, which critically combines social and economic questions about how societies function and support themselves. While intentionally aligning theories and methods from a variety of disciplines such as anthropology, business, sociology, tourism, and development studies, this paper and Puffer case analysis asks the larger question, “What can human-centered tourism development look like?” To begin to answer this question, definitions of tourism and of development are established, and the relational history of tourism and development made explicit. Additional background will address ways in which tourism research and tourism development have been and can be utilized for business- and community-focused development. The literature review will highlight previous work around tourism development in Indonesia, considering Indonesian state policy, tourism development findings in coastal communities, and implications for managers and their marketing.

Finally, Puffer will be placed in the context of this research. I will identify ways in which the private entity can increase its revenues through marketing and experience-creation, while simultaneously supporting the local people and economy, thus involving them in the process of development. The case analysis will use anthropological theories of pilgrimage, sustainability, and culture contact to inform a business analysis of this Indonesian scuba-dive resort. Each of these three anthropological theories takes concepts from the larger field of the tourism anthropology. Examining pilgrimage will inform how and why people are drawn to travel, while examining sustainability and culture contact will inform tourists' behaviors upon arrival. For each of these three theoretical groundings, I will offer suggestions for both internal management and outbound communications in order to guide Puffer towards increased profits and greater community impact. While increasing profits, these community impact suggestions will provide Puffer with ongoing recommendations geared towards continuing to achieve their founding ideals.

## **BACKGROUND: PRACTICES IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

### *Functioning definitions of tourism and development*

Before constructing an understanding of tourism development, it is important to acknowledge some of the definitions and contexts of tourism and development as they exist separately. Definitions of tourism frequently highlight different aspects of the tourist system, often extensively—the tourists, the “hosts,” the destination, the interactions, the transactions, and the motivations for travel are just a few of the pieces included in common definitions of tourism. Berger (2013) provides a helpful list of characteristics to define tourism as an activity, being that it is temporary, voluntary, tied to consumer culture, based on a round trip, and made possible by

travel and communications (p. 16). Berger would also typologize categories for thinking about tourism—this analysis of a scuba resort would fall in Berger's categories of beach, adventure, and sustainable tourism. While these are constructive and informative ways for considering what tourism is, I found that listing out a variety of common characteristics is best for a working and fluid definition. Leite and Swain (2015) do this neatly and thoughtfully:

As a loosely integrated social field, it includes (a) multiple actors with differing degrees of power and autonomy (tourists, workers, residents, expatriates, foreign and local guides, and other intermediaries including researchers); (b) characteristic practices (traveling, sightseeing, photographing, shopping, relaxing; or, conversely, marketing, selling, serving, guiding, ignoring); and (c) constituent institutions (travel agencies, airports, hotels/hostels, museums, heritage sites, souvenir shops). A web of relationships and interconnections integrate this social field, running the gamut from emotional to material, imaginative to environmental, interpersonal to financial. (p. 2)

This definition works well to lay out an initial map of tourism characteristics and entities, as it exhaustively starts to mention all the various actors and ways that they interact to create meaning for tourists and tourism communities. Important in listing all the key components is the understanding that tourism is complex, filled with various behaviors, communications, perceptions, interactions. As the case study reveals, Puffer is well-suited to this working definition given the variety of actors, numerous practices, and types of institutions involved. Missing from this definition are two important points that V. Smith (1977) captures: the importance of culture and culture change, and the elaborated role of external moderators such as governments, international agencies, multinational enterprises, and local businesses (p. 4). Emphasizing the “web” of interconnectedness, especially the tangential relations of government

and culture, suggests the widespread and affective nature of tourism. It is more than a series of economic transactions, but rather an integrated part of societies and their change—in other words, part of their development.

A couple definitions of development are combined for use in this case study.

Development here will be defined as planned economic and social transformation at the local and national levels, based on capacity to utilize the resources of nature (P. Burns, 1999, p. 138; Hobart, 1993, p. 1; Rodney, 1974, p. 28). Development is the multi-pronged relationship between resource usage, politics, economics, and social/cultural life, as it pertains to change and meeting human needs within a community or nation. Different policies and decisions between these realms affect the course of development, and how it can be discussed. Most salient here are development discourses around globalization—given that tourism is a large international industry, and that a decent chunk of advertising and revenue for Puffer is international.

Globalization is an ongoing process that “drives cross-border economic integration to new levels of intensity” (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. 131). A key part of early globalization theory was a focus on development via international institutions—the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—and the specific policies and agreements these institutions pushed through to ensure a specific type of development. These institutions largely focused on pumping up national GDPs by affecting national policies and economic decisions in countries seen as “underdeveloped” (Frank, 1969). Examples of this include rapid urbanization and introducing large-scale consumerism. Critiques of globalization and its effects from Rodney (1974), Bello (2001) and P. Burns (1999) all highlight how the policies and agreements pushed through these institutions do not represent the on-the-ground needs of developing Third World countries—rather, they continue to secure western interests.

Even when this development occurs via the government, it continues to benefit a privileged few. Specific trade agreements from the World Trade Organization kept resource and economic benefit flowing to private companies and individuals, or countries outside of where the development policies impact (Bello, 2001, p. 8). The agreements allowed for resources (land usage) to be exported commodities through trade or in tourism. By controlling the laws and the land, private corporations and “developed” countries successfully made their long-term control of other nations’ development more profitable, and harder to disrupt (M. Smith, 1997, pp. 202-203).

This is, of course, a narrow and abbreviated history, definition, and context for development. Development has a longer history that gets complicated when you consider the history and politics numerous localized examples, and even more complicated when you consider how to begin unravelling it. The purpose of the definition here serves as an initial illumination of the components of development, and an initial critique of globalization vis-à-vis international development. This sets the stage for building the relationship between tourism and development. The following sections elaborate on tourism’s history with development, and what some solutions may look like for addressing the ways in which tourism, development, and tourism development can be used to empower and financially enable those living in tourist areas.

### *Tourism as development, or “tourism development”*

Starting in the 1960s, the World Bank started heavily investing in tourism development, specifically by funding private sector development—again, an additional value chain to generate growth in national GDPs (Abram, 2010, p. 235). While concepts of travel and tourism were not novel at the time, large-scale investment and international promotion of it was. At the same time,

The World Trade Organization supported this initiative by promoting tourism as relatively non-polluting and economically beneficial to the communities adopting it (Hitchcock, 1997, p. 94). Tourism, and the economic discourse around it at an international policy level, would continue to evolve through the late twentieth century. Tourism development via the World Bank focused on building out capacity for tourism through infrastructure through the 1970s, referencing key elements of globalization. By the 1990s tourism was simultaneously too profitable for the private sector to manage and requiring additional infrastructure, turning the focus in part to examining micro-policy reform, and promoting public-private partnerships (PPP) which will be a component of the Puffer case study (Abram, 2010). So, tourism itself has historically been a component of development, as local realities change due to international expectations from institutions and tourists themselves. Tourism has begun to inform anthropological theory around globalization, due to the ways in which tourism alters people, information, and cultures, and the ways in which it can inform power-related discourses around global citizenship and diversity (Leite & Swain, 2015, p. 4). More specifically, tourism alters the economic and sociocultural systems in previously undeveloped areas.

When communities convert land use to tourism properties, decisions are made that disrupt the local economic system. In order to serve tourists and the accompanying job market, locals will often give up activities like agriculture or hunting, which often provide significant, if not better, benefit to local communities than jobs in tourism (Hitchcock, 1997). Not only are some lands being used explicitly for tourism, hence limiting their functional use for food-based development, but locals' occupations change in a way so that they are not even working or using said land for their own controlled benefit. Jobs and income from tourism are still important and key benefits, but tourism changes the nature of work, and dependency on labor in these

communities. Nash (1977) would argue that most of tourism develops due to the exogenous forces beyond locals' control, specifically the expectations of tourists themselves. The on- and off-seasons of tourism demonstrate this clearly, as locals are able to provide for themselves better and worse depending on when the major tourist cycles occur.

Tourists hold a specific power over tourist development abroad, as they have achieved a level of wealth to sustain leisure. In situations of mass international tourism, tourists will expect Western amenities that align with their perception of the world capitalist economy, including both facilities and products (Yamashita, 2004). The negative effects of providing these amenities are experienced by locals, who experiences changes in their local markets and infrastructure. They see price inflation for imported goods and a rise in the cost of living for their given area (V. Smith, 1977; Yamashita, 2004). This also affects decisions around local culture—especially if Western cultural goods become better-selling in places that should celebrate local flavors and traditions. In this way, tourism development has been described as “continuing the hegemony” due to its ability to affect both the economic and the sociocultural (V. Smith, 1977, p. 9).

The sociocultural portion of tourism is problematized by development just as much as the economic portion. Populations are enticed to jobs in tourism for the perceived benefits of social mobility and the westernized cash economy. Yet, this is in contrast with the fact that the tourists inherently have more mobility and capital than locals in their ability to take time for leisure and travel (V. Smith, 1977). The tourist naturally experiences literal and social mobility as they travel, and the positive psychological benefits that come with this. The locals providing the tourism experience often experience the opposite—their stress can be induced by person-to-person encounters with tourists that expose the inequalities and disparities between tourist and tourist worker (Chambers, 1997; V. Smith, 1977). McKean (1973), researching on Bali in south



Indonesia, would position these encounters as an exchange in which it is known that the locals are “culturally rich but economically poor,” while tourists are “economically rich but culturally poor” (Howe, 2005, p. 135). The mutual understanding here is a conscious trading and commoditization of Balinese culture values for Western economic values and capital. So, notions and ideas about a local culture are commoditized and simply packaged for tourists’ consumption. This relates back to the notion of globalization as resource extraction—rather than exporting goods, culture itself is for sale with disproportionate benefits. This description of exchanges from McKean presents a simple transaction between wealth and culture, it excludes a broader conversation on power dynamics, and the other transactions, like educational and emotional, that occur.

In the case of Bali, research from Howe (2005) confirms that culture, and whether it erodes or evolves with tourism, is a significant concern for the Balinese people. As previously stated, tourists often demand Western sentiments and amenities, but they also make decisions on what sorts of culture they might like to consume. Tourists make decisions around the perceived value of their trip. While this includes price, it also includes the politics and culture of where they are going. Risk-averse tourists will not travel to places with messy politics or culture they do not want to experience. And so, tourist destinations make large-scale decisions about how they would like to be perceived in order to privilege tourism. An example of this is common for tropical tourist destinations, when local and national government get involved to change public behavior, regulate and suppress informal business, and better manage waste (Picard, 2010, p. 143). Cultural values are altered and transformed for perceived economic benefit, though many of these changes around infrastructure are exactly what contribute to the rising cost of living. The presence of tourists creates economic and cultural changes between neighboring locals and the

state—tourists themselves are influencers in these changes, directly and indirectly (P. Burns, 1999; Howe, 2005). Even if traditional notions of cultural practices are preserved, culture continuously becomes “reconstructed in the context of tourism” (Yamashita, 2004, p. 4). The globalized world facilitates the movement of people, money, infrastructure, and information across sociocultural boundaries, which changes and influences cultural activities.

As economic behavior changes in tourist communities, the decision around culture and cultural development is so far presented as binary. Cultural development appears as choice between controlling and restricting tourism reach to preserve cultural integrity, or the encouragement of tourism that may require unwanted changes in culture (V. Smith, 1977). The decisions around what constitutes traditional culture now consider the perceptions and economic benefits of outsiders, the tourist visitors. Culture changes are often performative and constantly manipulated for commodification, often recognized as one of the many effects of development. Though, culture change persists in ways that are organic and unconscious in the ever-changing tourism industry and global political climate.

In the context of development, culture can be one of those natural resources that is both exploited by international interests, but still dynamic in its use to achieve economic gains for local individuals. Problematically for tourism, both the economic and social “profits” do not typically stay in the community. Tourism provides culturally commodified experiences to the tourists and visitors, and in their wake, often leaves negative impacts due to environmental damage, the disappearance of traditional culture, and the commodification of the place and people (Yamashita, 2004). The financial returns from tourist visits often go to transnational tourist companies and/or local management elites. This supports the claim that tourism is a form of problematized development—in which a local area can be drained of the economic and

cultural benefit to community members. The analysis of Puffer below tries to bridge these negative economic and sociocultural impacts, looking specifically at strategies for limiting economic damage and preventing culture commodification in the surrounding communities. I treat tourism development as dynamic by looking for a middle ground that boosts Puffer's profitability while addressing increased impact on the community. Recognizing that many of tourism development's issues are systematically interconnected, both the company and community provide a fresh model for thinking about change and agency in tourism development.

### *Change and agency in tourism development*

A variety of discourses have emerged to address, imagine, and evaluate how to "fix" the issues concerning tourism and development. Sustainable development and ecotourism are a couple of the more-recognized (often buzzword) versions of this. This analysis draws its definition of sustainability from the framework for ecosystem stewardship set out by Chapin III et al. (2009), as "a strategy to respond to and shape social-ecological systems under conditions of uncertainty and change to sustain the supply and opportunities for use of ecosystem services to support human well-being" (p. 1). Important to include in this definition is that sustainability should not just include the strategies, but the actual actions that taken that address these social-ecological systems. Georgette Burns (2004) highlights how communities benefit economically, socially, and culturally from ecotourism when it's ensured that revenues go to and impact both the tourism operators and indirectly affected local people. An alternative or complement to this are community-based tourism initiatives, which are ventures managed by local and native community groups. This creates a variety of benefits, including revenue staying in the community, individual empowerment and ownership, community strength and unity, ecological

conservation, human resource development, and reinforced cultural identity (Han et al., 2019, p.2). Duggan (1997) writes about this model when tourism was indigenously and communally controlled by the Eastern Cherokee: there was ethnic pride, cultural revitalization, and year-round employment. In reality and often in marketing, this community-based tourism development is in line with ecotourism and sustainable development. Given that these are niche kinds of tourism that are often sought directly by tourists, this sort of “responsible” tourism shifts the burden and responsibility for minimizing negative impacts onto the tourists themselves (Gmelch, 2010).

A couple models of development (simultaneously alternatives to development) are presented here to identify how tourism can be developed alongside the definition presented here, while resisting the worst effects of globalization. They also serve to explain some of the means by which ecotourism and sustainable development have historically been successful in creating change. Ponting, McDonald, and Wearing (2005) use a three-pronged sustainable tourism development model, suggesting that development should move away from Western models of business, form long-term planning initiatives, and foster cross-cultural understanding between the multitude of those implicated, including operators, tourists, and destination residents (Saufi et al., 2014). These three ideas have been iterated by numerous others with different wording. Peter Burns (1999) argues for this as “localization” in opposition to globalization, where communities are independent, differentiated, have decreased dependency on outside entities, and focus on goals that are defined by the community (p. 114). In the community, consensus and mutual agreement are methods that can be used to determine the future of tourism locally as they integrate community feedback and visioning into what they hope to see for their collective future (Nuñez, 1977; Whittaker, 1997).

Multinational tourism research and development does not usually address localized issues in tourism, and so localized community control over social and natural environments will naturally resist some of the imposed development narratives (Hitchcock, 1997). Key to each of these frameworks, is a focus on collaboration and cohesion. In the Sphere of Tourism Resilience framework from Cochrane (2010), the intersection of leadership, stakeholder cohesion, and harnessing of market forces creates a sustainable management of resources (p. 182). This model for resilience can easily be compared to the model of Ponting, McDonald, and Wearing (2005), for both have components that highlight the importance of (1) market/profitability, (2) community collaboration and decision-making, and (3) a focus on local understanding and local impact.

While all of these ideas and frameworks can seem ideal, actually implementing them and creating change remains difficult. Abram (2010) and Nuñez (1977) both argue for ways in which anthropology and academia should intervene in tourism development, while Chambers (1997) argues that tourism research as a field might be a form of mediation that can influence and alter tourism development. The purpose of the Puffer case analysis is to demonstrate how third-party academic research created by me may begin to advise Puffer on how to both control the tourist experience and alter the course of tourism development. The most salient term for the framework of change here might be “people-centered development” (P. Burns, 1999, p. 147). This refers to local empowerment, placing the burden and responsibility for creating change on Puffer rather than the tourists. The marketing recommendations consider how to make marketing people-focused using anthropological theories, as targeting tourists through marketing around culture contact and building community among locals are both people-centered practices. Anthropologists have a history of focusing on peoples who have lived through the effects of

development—be these social, political, cultural, economic and transactional—and advocating for them in their work. The knowledge generated here in practice promotes the creation and continuation of community-university partnerships, with the commercial aspects of this paper bringing a sense of legitimacy and practice to academics researching tourism (Abram 2010). Reiterating the introduction, this study not only connects the dots of different disciplines, but is a framework for merging academia, private business, and public interest.

### **STATE POLICY, COASTAL COMMUNITIES, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS**

Anthropological, economic, tourism, and development research has taken a variety of forms in Indonesia. While a variety of solutions that can generate revenue and contribute to culture have been researched, this section reviews work focused exclusively on Indonesia. Three main foci evolve from the literature around tourism development in Indonesia: (1) research that examines the relationship between culture and state policy, (2) research focused on understanding the impact of tourism on the community, and (3) research that informs tourism community stakeholders. Early research was primary anthropological, though more recent research has provided more insight into the business and economics of tourism development. The timeline presented here positions tourism as evolving after Indonesia declared their independence from the Dutch and Japanese. Though the Dutch in particular were responsible for promoting visions and expectations around what it was like to travel to Indonesia, most academic research of the region begins after Indonesia as a country declared its independence in 1945.

The constitution written and set forth by Indonesia in 1945 established the nation's cultural policy, in part to begin to generate state tourism revenue. The policy recognizes the

importance of Indonesian regional culture, while attempting to create a sense and unity around a state-imposed “national” culture.<sup>2</sup> This cultural policy has been revised and appended, even for specific regions. A policy for Bali, an island of Indonesia, highlights the enormous potential for tourism, but that tourism and culture should mature in harmony to achieve a sort of balance (Yamashita, 2004). The tourism policy for better and worse, enacts social and cultural change within and between tourism communities, often creating internal strife over who should control tourism projects (Howe, 2005). Early research on tourism and development in Indonesia focused on the impact of the cultural tourism taking place resulting alongside these policies, largely in Bali and Tana Toraja, a regency in the South Sulawesi province.

Yamashita (2004) and Picard (1996) focus on Bali, and how cultural values have been affected by Dutch colonization, state cultural policy, and tourism development. McKean (1973), and Howe (2005) contribute to the Bali discourse, examining the economic and cultural transactions between tourists and the communities that host. Together they present a dichotomy. On one hand, some views of tourism have heavily emphasized providing non-cultural activities and impersonal consumption, which in the case Bali makes tourism non-localized and generating little revenue. On the other hand, presenting cultural aspects for tourist consumptions leads communities to make decisions on how much commoditized culture tourists should have access to, and what tourists should be distanced from to protect locals from outside gaze and influence (Howe, 2005). The state policies often resulted in cultural modification, commodification, and homogenization to accommodate tourists. Howe (2005), Kausar and Gunawan (2018), and

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<sup>2</sup> An important clause in this initial policy states that: “The national culture is the product of the mental and spiritual activities of the entire Indonesian people. The old and indigenous cultures which were the peaks of cultural life in all the regions of Indonesia, together form the national culture. Cultural activities should lead to the advancement of civilization and culture, and the strengthening of unity without rejecting new elements of foreign cultures which can develop or enrich the own national culture and raise the human dignity of the Indonesian people.” (Yamashita, 2004, pp. 42-43)

Adams (2006) examine this regionally in Tana Toraja, identifying ways in which the national policy has homogenized regions under one national culture and limited regional and indigenous distinction. A source of struggle for these communities is identifying ways to strengthen their values in order to develop tourism alongside culture to preserve it. Almost all of these researchers qualify that the tradeoffs of cultural commodification for tourism are not sufficiently matched with equal economic benefits.

More recent research on state-induced development in Indonesia analyzes the effectiveness of community-based, participatory approaches to national park management that Indonesia established. Nugroho and Numata (2020a) write on how this form of development has generated interest in adjacent communities, but that residents' support is crucial for their success and implementation. Pickel-Chevalier et al. (2019) evaluate the effectiveness of some of the community-based tourism in Bali, noting that it favors economic growth, but remains fragile and needing improvement. Specifically, this looks like including involving younger participants and women to ensure a continuous stream of qualified human resources. And these cultural policies have been limited just to cultural tourism—other than the community-based tourism facilitated by the state, Indonesia has been criticized for not actively taking a role in the development and job creation (Saufi et al. 2014).

Moving away from culture as the primary focus, community-focused research begins to identify other strengths and weaknesses of tourism and development in Indonesia. Lasso and Dahles (2014) analyze tourism and development on Komodo Island, an island in the southern region near Bali, recognizing the transformations tourism has brought to locals' daily lives. Following the narrative tourism development presented in the background, the local community on the island gave up fishing to focus on tourism, particularly by selling souvenirs. Rather than



relying on the land and sea around them, their income became dependent on a limited and competitive market during a short tourist season. On the island, these researchers observed that should tourism decline, the locals would be left with few options to sustain themselves. Having transitioned away from fishing to sustain themselves, the community became dependent on the tourist market.

On the Mentawai islands, Towner and Orams (2016) found that almost one-quarter of tourism operators believed that tourism development in the future would need to depend heavily on government involvement and support to protect locals both from management and the uncertainty in the industry. Seasonality, political instability, natural disaster, global financial trends, and pandemics are other factors that negatively affect tourism, and highlight the uncertainty that can come to places dependent on tourism revenue. These are just some of the factors affecting a tourist market, but a significant amount of research has started to look at the actual and perceived effects of tourism on their communities. Examples from Pickel-Chevalier et al. (2019) highlight that tourism brings moderate economic benefits to local villages, but not wealth, and that the revenue just restructures the inequalities that exist between families (p. 21). Most often, these effects are studied as positive and negative effects to the community as reported by tourism operators, community members, government officials, and other key stakeholders. The tables below highlight the results of a few of these studies, looking at sociocultural, economic, and environmental impacts in Indonesian tourism communities that focus on surfing and diving. They reconcile both quantitative and qualitative data to understand perceived effects of tourism.

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Source(s)</b>
Employment opportunities and income; family welfare and sense of security	Kinseng et al. (2018); Towner & Milne (2017)
Better lifestyle and health benefits; more health facilities	Kinseng et al. (2018); Towner & Milne (2017)
Feeling of helping the community; pride and ownership over work	Kinseng et al. (2018); Towner & Milne (2017)
Learning about the outside world, forming new relationships	Towner & Milne (2017); Towner & Orams (2016)
Education and language learning	Towner & Milne (2017); Towner & Orams (2016)
Access to new resources: food, clothing, building materials, transportation	Kinseng et al. (2018)
Increased awareness for environment, including marine resource management, sustainability, waste management	Towner & Orams (2016)

**Table 1: Perceived positive impacts of tourism in coastal Indonesian communities**

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Source(s)</b>
Leakage to small/foreign group of investors; unequal distribution of income; limited buy-in opportunities for community	Gerungan & Chia (2020); Saufi et al. (2014); Towner & Davies (2019); Towner & Milne (2017); Towner & Orams (2016)
Side-effects of unequal wealth distribution: handout mentality, jealousy, seeing tourists as money	Gerungan & Chia (2020); Graci (2013); Towner & Milne (2017); Towner & Orams (2016)
Management issues: lack of community engagement, barriers to understanding industry, lack of trained staff, disrespect and mismanagement from operations, competition	Gerungan & Chia (2020); Graci (2013); Saufi et al. (2014); Towner & Davies (2019); Towner & Milne (2017)
Culture disruption/degradation as a result of: lack of respect from tourists, Western influence, alcohol, clothing, theft, and nonadherence to traditions/customs	Gerungan & Chia (2020); Kinseng et al. (2018); Towner & Milne (2017); Towner & Orams (2016)
Decrease in: community relations, mutual health among citizens, degree of closeness in community	Kinseng et al. (2018)
Loss of land, loss of resources, and displacement due to development, pollution, strained infrastructure	Gerungan & Chia (2020); Graci (2013); Towner & Orams (2016)
Decline in biodiversity of species and ecosystems	Graci (2013); Towner & Orams (2016)

**Table 2: Perceived negative impacts of tourism in coastal Indonesian communities**

The results from these seven studies are at-times conflicting, especially when certain environmental and economic results are seen as positive and negative in different respects. This seems to be an accurate representation, as different stakeholders perceive, celebrate, and worry about tourism's effects differently. The tourists that visit these locales perceive these factors differently, as researched by Towner and Milne (2017), who complement the literature by also asking surf tourists in Indonesia about the perceived benefits and harms of their tourism. These tourists saw their two most important benefits being local income and cultural interaction. The locals in the community also ranked the income (employment) as the number one benefit, while a lack of cultural respect was listed as one of the greatest harms. The tourists in the same study ranked "no negatives" as the most prevalent negative impact of their travels, which is a bit unsettling. Yet some of the lower-ranked negative effects like waste and uncontrolled development were mimicked in the responses of the community. Nugroho and Numata (2020b) position the perceptions of these effects and impact as "attitudes," referencing how certain demographics like age, gender, income, education and level of involvement in tourism will affect these attitudes, and ultimately a resident's intention to participate. Changing the attitudes and effects of tourism also relies on an understanding of the socioeconomic statuses of community participants. The question of gender specifically in tourism development is uncertain, as research will highlight both the empowerment and disempowerment of women working in the industry (Bentley, 2020; Wilkinson & Pratiwi, 1995).

Most recent research that examines tourism in Indonesia will highlight key implications for managers, even in coastal tourism industries. The concluding portion of this section will highlight some of these key findings so that they can be included in the case study. The review and case study both place a strong emphasis on this paper's concept of "sustainable"

development, i.e., development that is minimizes economic, social, and cultural harm in any form. In fact, there is a strong business case for this, as investing in the environment and the people will be more beneficial in the long term. Lucrezi et al. (2017) and Jamal and Camargo (2014) emphasize that effective and sustainable management is difficult without understanding the interaction between economic, social, and environmental concerns, especially as they are perceived by local people. Gerungan and Chia (2020) address the environmental portion of this. When the ocean and marine life are polluted and/or destroyed, it no longer becomes appealing to the tourist, leading to financial loss for the business entity. In fact, correct management of the scuba diving business can even lead to positive benefits for the environment (p. 6).

For the people portion of sustainable development, human resource management is crucial. Staff skill building in the diving industry contributes to sustainable and responsible development while increasing levels of expertise and quality of services (Gerungan & Chia, 2020). Some of these skills include general education and language proficiency, though can expand to include dive training. In addition, professionalism and proactive, inclusive management structures can improve actual and perceived performance. Saufi et al. (2014) recommend that facilitating this education to staff and broader community encourages participation and perceived benefits. Celebration of local culture has been an important recommendation to the private sector, as tourists enjoy special events and tourism that is non-commercial in coastal settings (Huwae et al., 2020).

Finally, previous research in Indonesia provides additional support for managers to engage in collaborative partnerships. Tourism stakeholders do not have a shared vision for sustainable development and have conflicting views for what portions of their culture they want to be seen by tourists (Cahyanto et al., 2013; Towner & Milne, 2017). Gerungan and Chia (2020)

argue that constant and long-term engagement with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the government are crucial for the sustainability of marine protected areas. Though agreeing in part, Kinseng et al. (2018) would rebuke that money is wasted on advocacy NGOs that fix issues often with international support, when it easily could have been put into more inclusive community-led efforts instead. The key distinction between NGOs and community-led initiatives here is that the NGOs are often reactive and require salary upkeep, while community-led initiatives engage the surrounding area in proactive activities based on input and collective vision.

Graci (2013) provides the most compelling structure for implementing collaborative partnerships. Graci's example looks at the establishment of the Gili Ecotrust on Gili Trawangan, an island in the south near Bali. In this instance, an ongoing community collaboration has successfully hired a manager to engage the community and stakeholders while demonstrating positive impacts for protecting the environment. The recommended terms for the "cross-sector" partnerships are a dynamic, emergent process where joint ownership of decisions constructively deals with difference of opinion, and the stakeholders are still independent yet assuming collective responsibility. The benefits from this partnership include shared resources, information, and environmental and social action plans, which allow the community to sustain the destination (p. 28). Saufi et al. (2014) recommend collaborations with institutions that can support educational efforts or smaller enterprises. These findings can be used to inform managers and decision-makers in the tourism industry. Research about tourist behaviors that can inform tourism stakeholders, like this study does, is thought to be both cheaper than ecological research but can also provide more profitable and sustainable management decisions (Mustika et al., 2013).

Marketing is an especially important management decision for tourism stakeholders, as it affects the budget, mediates tourists' expectations around experience, and compels a tourist visit. Marketing, or at least communications, have always had a critical role in tourism, and travel specifically—especially before the digital age. Huwae et al. (2020) researched how tourist satisfaction affects the marketing of a destination, and that tourism marketing manages expectations before travelling and the tourist experiences gained during and after travelling. For an analysis grounded in tourism development, this is not just a way to increase sales, but to mediate and influence the perceptions, hopes, and dreads that a tourist has for their destination pre-arrival. This is especially true in beachside recreational tourism, notorious for colorful descriptions of “sand, sea, and sex” that make a tourist want to go there (V. Smith, 1977, p. 3). Lofgren's similar description of “the global beach” is a bit more apt: “sun, sand, sea and the bodies that fill those spaces” (Löfgren, 2010, p. 46). Anthropological research has tried to tackle this, looking at the discourses that this marketing highlights, specifically ideas around innocence, purity, authenticity and abundance (Picard, 2010). The objectification of the bodies Löfgren (2010) describes for beach tourism in general is a crucial wording for understanding the historical context of beach tourism marketing.

Recognizing problematic and objectifying marketing is an initial step for how dive resorts can move away from an objectification of place and people to a celebration of local culture and natural diversity in their marketing. On a sky-view level, marketing can start to sort the type of experience: whether the resort is packaged or for individually driven tourists, whether their goal is recreation, education, and or culture, and if this is a type of mass tourism or elite tourism (Nuñez, 1977, p. 213). Rather than trying to assimilate into one of these categories or frameworks, highlighting the specifics of their resort will allow Puffer to differentiate.

Suhartanto (2020) posits that interactive and informative promotions that encourage tourists to want to “co-create” will be extremely important (p. 847). To do this, the analysis focuses on celebrating culture, sustainability, and the overall destination as a means to encourage tourists to want to participate. Leveraging Hall’s framework of intangible resources, promoting staff know-how, culture, environment, and the overall feeling generated at the destination will be crucial to revenue-generating marketing, and locally organized change (1992). Each of the three key focus areas references existing anthropological theory in culture contact, sustainability, and pilgrimage followed by analysis and recommendations for Puffer to integrate the concepts into their business strategy and marketing. I surveyed Puffer’s local competition generally for some more context, arriving at the conclusion that Puffer can better stay modern and aligned with local competition by deliberately focusing on sustainability and frontier exploration, while celebrating local culture will be a point of differentiation.

### **METHODS AND DATA**

The confidential data for this analysis was shared by Puffer, a dive resort operating in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. I was connected to them through a family friend, and they welcomed the opportunity to have an external set of eyes on their strategies. While dealing with pre-COVID losses at one location, they also appreciated advice on attracting a higher-end market as they renovate. The analysis synthesizes recommendations from a variety of disciplines surrounding tourism development to provide meaningful recommendations to the Puffer team around strategy and marketing. The discourse and literature review on tourism development provide insights on how to support the community and preserve the environment. There is a business case for using this research. Globalization has led to increased access to travel and competition, and the standardization of physical, intellectual and emotional products. By providing localized and

differentiated unique service, Puffer will simultaneously attract and retain more customers while also resisting some of the negative effects of tourism development (P. Burns, 1999).

While incorporating insights from tourism development, the focus of the analysis and key to differentiation for Puffer will be an understanding of the anthropological theories that affect and speak to their work. Anthropological theory around culture contact, sustainability, and pilgrimage addresses human relationship to tourism and why people travel, which provides key insights for business development in the tourism industry. Berger (2013) suggests that humans travel to “see beautiful places, to satisfy our curiosity, to be amused, [and] to gain a sense of the fellowship of men and women” (pp. 39-40). In this description, it becomes apparent that themes of development and the 3-part analysis below are inherently interconnected. Graburn (1977) problematizes even something like surf tourism, which can treat nature and “her purpose” as its own sort of ethnic cultural experience (p. 27). The definition of environmental tourism from Valene Smith (1977) as experiencing a “truly alien scene” connects the notion of environmental sustainability with the unfamiliar frontier (p. 3). This is to say that each of the sections is intrinsically tied up with each other in varying degrees that highlight an importance of sociocultural, economic, and environmental development, and that their intersection becomes at-times difficult to untangle.

### Data

Puffer's strategy, marketing efforts, and finances respectively paint a picture of how Puffer functions, how they communicate what they do, and finally how they perform financially as a result. Many documents revealing strategy, such as the Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat (SWOT) analysis, are subject to an internal bias from the Puffer team. It reflects their



internal observations of their business, not considering how tourists or even other resort managers might frame these observations. Given the level of forthright honesty in some of the claims, they are taken at face value, and refuted here when they appear to be false or in contradiction with another claim. Puffer generates revenue primarily at their two resort locations, Goby and Platax, though this also includes activities like tours that don't necessarily take place on the resort property itself. The following information was received from the Puffer team, spanning the years 2017 to 2020:

- 2020 Start of Year meeting notes [1]
  - Vision Statement and Mission Statement [1a]
  - Four steps of service [1b]
  - Service values [1c]
  - Employee promise [1d]
  - SWOT analysis [1e]
- Standard Operating Procedures and Marketing Plan [2]
- COVID-19 Social Media Strategy [3]
- Expansion Plan [4]
- Pitch Pack (Infographic) [5]
- PNL Statements for Goby and Platax, 2017-19 [6]
- Digital media, publicly available [7]
  - Main website [7a]
  - Puffer Snorkeling website [7b]
  - Facebook page [7c]
  - Instagram profile [7d]
  - LinkedIn page [7e]
  - TripAdvisor pages [7f]
  - PR-coverage accessed through website [7g]
- Guest satisfaction feedback from 2018 [8]

The materials in this list will subsequently be referenced in the text below by referring to the corresponding brackets.

### **ANALYSIS**

Puffer, located in Northern Sulawesi, manages two dive resorts in Goby and Platax. The analysis and recommendations come at a critical time in Puffer's development as they renovate a

majority of their property to become an innovative boutique resort and in turn seek a higher-end customer market that can afford more expensive stays [4]. Specifically, they know that they are hoping to target and reach a number of new markets that are international, including families, conservation and sustainability focused customers, adventure tourists, and non-divers, while still retaining their existing markets [1e, 2, 4]. The table below provides an overview of Puffer's profit centers and how they currently contribute to total revenue for both locations:

<b>Profit Source</b>	<b>Percent of revenue for both resorts as averages for 2017-2019</b>	<b>Net profit margin for profit sources as averages over for 2017-2019</b>
Room	36.84%	90.44%
Food and Beverage	8.03%	-96.19%
Diving Related	42.29%	84.19%
Tours	2.55%	66.59%
Gift Shop	1.37%	55.15%
Massage	2.15%	55.92%
Other	6.77%	82.95%

**Table 3: Profit source contributions across both resorts, 2017-2019**

Rooming and diving are the two largest profit sources for Puffer and are simultaneously also the two profit centers that they have maximized profit efficiency for. In looking at how the business model and marketing can focus on people and sustainability, this analysis will generate ideas to promote room and board, tours, gift shop and massage; in looking at sustainability and the notion of frontiers, this analysis will generate ideas to promote diving and tours, and in turn room and board. The Goby and Platax locations demonstrated similar levels of profit in 2017 and 2018, though in 2019, the Goby location experienced net losses without any observable changes in

management style or funding decisions. I am attributing this financial loss to Caves' concept of cost disease, where costs observably rise relative to customers' willingness to pay (2002). The analysis below highlights, ways to generate more internal value from staff and the community through education partnerships. Though these recommendations do incur additional expenses, communicating them to visitors is a strategy to increase sales. Though not made explicit, these should be especially pressing and possibly tested for the Goby location.

Marketing strategy is inextricably linked to Puffer's business model and strategy, as they claim, "The business needs a clear vision for the future to ensure that the Marketing effort is focused on achieving this goal." [2]. In addition, the staff values underscore how achieving positive coverage on social media is an important role in supporting the company [1c]. Puffer has identified internally that they have a good marketing strategy. Their marketing channels are sound, utilizing customer relationship management (CRM) software to solicit feedback, encourage revisit loyalty, send follow-up thank-you notes, and encourage visitors to share about their experiences [2]. Currently, attending dive shows is an important and successful part of their strategy, as its sales and trade show expenses account for 31.7% of their marketing expenses, and agents account for 65% of revenue from visiting groups [2, 6]. Dive shows in an in-person environment, allow consumers, product manufacturers, and travel agents to connect with businesses operating in the dive industry.

While I agree that this strategy is good, there is opportunity for Puffer to strengthen its strategy in digital and print platforms through more compelling content aimed at their new higher-end market [1e]. Their website and social media can better communicate the opportunities for their revenue streams as there are difficult and unimaginative user journeys and elements of branding confusion. Their key communication pillars could benefit from use of the three focus

areas highlighted in the subsequent sections. The website they use to promote their snorkeling seems more appealing to adventure-oriented customers than their main site, and it still offers all of their services but with an updated, modern, and appealing use of graphics. The strategy as a whole would best be supported through better niche marketing on social media and more formal media such as magazines and newspapers, which will attract educated high-income customers (Seymour, 2012, p. 164). Though not explicitly address in the following sections, PR attention is the most appropriate and compelling way to in communicate with rich description about local culture, sustainability, and adventure all-in-one to a more expensive market.

An overall recommendation for Puffer, regardless of the changes suggested below, is to better utilize their internal assets to share their story. Video collateral available on their site and social media videos excellently communicate the three focus areas addressed below, but their website and social media can do this better. Indonesia was voted Best Country in the World on Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards in 2019, for its landscape and wildlife, and its food and culture, which relates to this analysis' focus on celebrating people, culture, nature, and escapism (WNI, 2020). These are just a few of the key internal assets that Puffer can better communicate these selling points through their own channels. Highlighting the three focus areas around culture, sustainability and pilgrimage below is not a stretch for Puffer, and in fact is deeply tied to their history. The founders initially established Puffer with a focus on sustainability, local impact for their people, and a general mission of including others in a sense of adventure.

Now managed by the next generation, this story should not get lost, and can continue to be true given the initiatives and services that Puffer runs. DEMA, one of the trade shows that Puffer participates in, suggests that storytelling is an important connection point for attracting

new customers (DEMA, 2007). Sharing past and present stories that highlight people, the community, sustainability, and the greater sense of adventure that comes with beachside and scuba tourism will differentiate Puffer while recognizing their mission and history as they undergo internal development. As an example, they do already have some recent history with advocating against local practices that harm the environment, an initiative which brought together local communities to conserve wildlife areas. While these recommendations relate to marketing, the business initiatives that accompany them will address self-identified pain points from Puffer, including revenue increase, internal company strategy, embracing mission and core values, motivating older staff, training and retaining new staff, understanding competition, seeking better-planned resort development, and better-controlling mass tourism [1, 1e, 2].

### ***Human interaction, cultural understanding, staff empowerment***

This section grapples with the management of people, and the inevitable contact culture that occurs when tourists visit a destination. Gehrman (1994) would argue that tourism in Indonesia is a binary, either cultural or recreational. The theories of cultural emergence and culture contact explore how for any international tourism entity, this is not necessarily true, as even in recreational tourism there are interactions that could be investigated through the lens of culture contact. Recognizing this at a dive resort, though working to provide more recreational than cultural activities, could lead to better-mediating tourist expectations and focusing more internally on staff empowerment. As Puffer rethinks their business strategies as they undergo renovation, an increased focus on their staff will realign them with the founding values that committed to supporting the local community.

*Informing theories: Cultural emergence, recognizing the "other"*

Theories on culture contact suggest what happens when tourists travel internationally to new places. The theory of cultural emergences suggests that when two cultures meet, there is either homogenization or emergence (Yamashita, 2004, p. 10). Rephrased, there is either a loss of culture as explored in the literature review, or a more dynamic intervention that positions culture as a source of continuous creation and asymmetrical borrowing (Nuñez, 1977; Yamashita, 2004). Often, communities and lifestyles are invented for promotion. In beach and eco-tourism resorts, tourist communities often alter culture so that it has little to do with both the local population and the visiting tourists (Chambers, 1997). Recognition of culture is minimal on both the tourists' and host's part of the tourism transaction, and most interactions become mediating specifically through accessing a destination's services and offerings. This is due to misconceptions on both sides about tourism, and different expectations for what it means to host and to travel. In the case of Korowai in southeast Indonesia, locals perceived tourism as getting transactional access to consumer culture, while tourists viewed it as escaping consumer culture (Stasch, 2019). So, while host communities were abandoning cultural tourist performance, tourists were visiting with the hopes of experiencing cultural thinking other than their own. Regardless of difference in regional perceptions the exchanges that occur are not strictly economic. In many cases, staff serving wealthier tourists will realize their own poverty and the colonizer-colonized relationship, leading to feelings of envy on the local side, and on the tourists' side, feeling dehumanized and allowed in solely for the economic benefit they provide (Hitchcock, 1997; Nash, 1977; V. Smith, 1977).

Contributing to the problem in a reciprocal and negative effect are the perceptions of tourists, who view culture as a commodity, objectify the hosts, and expect Western amenities and

service. Portraying the “other” as an “other” creates a “docile caption of tourist fulfillment” which in turn disallows tourists from forming empathy for their hosts, consuming history, ethnic identity, and culture to satisfy expectation of encountering local color (Chambers, 1997; Greenwood, 1977; MacCannell, 2011). Guests ultimately wield more agency and privilege in their capacity to travel, but host communities can have some control over how they market themselves, and which aspects of their culture they choose to preserve or present (V. Smith, 1977). Many serve as “culture-brokers,” as their required daily communications as interpreters, tour guides, and on-hand staff make them local experts to be relied on for better or for worse (P. Burns, 1999).

More inclusive and organic styles of management that encourage and include staff in planning and decision making are an important solution to this. Enabling staff to have agency in their work and appearance should both improve performance and limit the culture commodification that typically occurs in the inevitable transactions. One way of cultural celebration and preservation that can occur is through hosting events, which when managed by locals, create controlled environments for tourists to participate and begin to understand more about local culture. Language and education barriers are obstacles to hosting these types of event, highlighting the importance for companies to provide access to education and language learning. Especially in Indonesia, operators who do this are not just fulfilling the needs of tourism, but actively anticipating future changes in the industry and local management (Ernawati, 2003, p. 2).

*Analysis and recommendations: staff service values and mission-oriented trainings*

Puffer's internal strategy and visioning is filled with competing discourses on how their staff are perceived and involved.<sup>3</sup> Puffer's vision statement cites the goal of "happiest staff in the industry nationally", yet Puffer's motto, four steps of service, and service value, and employee promise place too high a focus on a sense of servitude. While this may make for excellent customer service, it may place staff members' social and cultural views in a state of dilemma. The motto, four steps of service, and service values all place a strong emphasis on continuous anticipation of guests' needs in a way that feels unnatural and forced [1a, 1b, 1c]. The steps of service emphasize always using a guests' name, but this practice is tied up with the expectation of service rather than other realized benefits, like a friendly and new relationship.<sup>4</sup> Some service values and portions of the employee promise support a focus and retention of identity. The service values highlight pride in appearance, language, and behavior, while the employee promise promotes honesty, integrity, diversity, enhanced quality of life, and the fulfillment of individual aspirations [1c, 1d]. Many of the on-paper goals and objectives of staff management appear to fall short when Puffer themselves have examined their strengths and shortcomings internally, and do not address the issue (and potential asset) of each staff member's perception of culture. The core cultural values important to an individual staff member are not recognized in these materials.

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<sup>3</sup> An unknown for me in this analysis is language barrier and interpretation. Many of the service-related strategy items were delivered to be in English and Indonesian. Though no translation was required on my part, I played around with translating portions in Google Translate—some hold up, but some have very different tones when translated. Google Translate will of course lose context and intonation in translation, but an interesting point to wonder whether these values were translated from one language to another or created alongside each other.

<sup>4</sup> This was informed by a personal experience of travel when I got to know a dive guide named Dylan off a coast in Belize. It was Dylan's job to keep us organized, engaged, and attended to during the day, but they also lived nearby on the island at night. At least a couple nights we would get together to talk on the beach and share about our respective backgrounds and cultures, an informal experience that made me feel more connected and welcomed to a place I was only just visiting.



Puffer claims to employ staff from local villages, and they do so relatively successfully, writing to me informally about having one hundred twenty full time staff in January 2020 [4]. Though, there are other materials that suggest issues in their staffing process. Puffer self-identifies a looming threat of competitors stealing staff but no explanation for why, perhaps due to wage competition or issues with Puffer management and visitors [2]. Despite having a professional multicultural management team, there are elements of internal chaos. Disrespect of team and management, language barriers, lack of job descriptions, lack of collaboration and work sharing among dive guides, weak internal communication, and getting staff onboard with the mission have all been identified as internal weaknesses [1e]. These unfortunately are in direct contrast with some service values that all staff should be onboard with, namely that staff are involved in the planning of work, have the opportunity to learn and grow, create positive and supportive work environment, and are empowered to create new, unique, and memorable experiences for guests [1c]. The collateral presented to me suggested why there might be barriers to some of the issues, namely that the majority of higher management (other than the owners) are not Indonesian [4]. In addition, most of the internal strategy and documents are presented in English, with just the mission, vision, and staff value statements presented in Indonesian. If language barriers are already an issue for staff in guest-tourist conversations, then they likely prevent staff from being able to participate in and understand Puffer's business strategies.

The apparent solution, more difficult to implement, is a more active role in staff support. Organizational development meetings where the full staff are involved should take place more frequently than the current once-a-quarter period. A focus should be placed on training and empowering staff to move into and support higher leadership roles that are currently filled by nonlocals. Language, education, and dive training in addition to what is available in the

surrounding community done outside the community have been seen by Puffer as opportunities for development, and these might boost guest satisfaction ratings specifically in their dive programs. In 2018 across both resorts, guests reported an 84.0% overall satisfaction rating with the resort staff, while only a 62.8% satisfaction rating for the dive and snorkel staff [8]. While no comment was offered by Puffer for why this discrepancy might be, improving language, dive, and marine life education could provide more value to guests that opt-in to those experiences.

Educational programs from Puffer are already and should continue to be developed in-house, strengthening Puffer's position in the community as a learning and growth opportunity. While it is common and often beneficial to partner with university settings, the recommendation to develop an in-depth employee education and training program in-house will generate demand for employment there, preventing than employee loss. Development of such training allows for Puffer to be a thought leader in the local area, perhaps even generating an additional source of revenue should they open it up to the public. On average over the three-year period, staff comprise 70.8% of Puffer's expenses, but additional investment in caring for and training staff will strengthen internal growth and long-term retention [6]. Investing in this training for the staff not only increases value for the staff members themselves, but also enhances communication for the international visitors that Puffer hosts.

In their marketing, especially on Instagram and the website, Puffer can highlight more in-depth about their staff, including what excites each individual about working there. It currently features photos of staff, and notes around service, but other than acknowledging the team or staff are they become dive-certified, does not celebrate them with a sense of agency [7a]. Increased focus should be placed on highlighting the benefits of working there, such as education for English, diving, and plastic reduction to signal to potential new hires and customers that it

invests in its people. Their first service value addresses building relationships and having guests for life, but this is not highlighted strongly in their digital communications. When generated by staff as Puffer claims, and without a “sales” objective, this minimizes the possibility of creating content that objectifies staff for tourist consumption [3]. Rather, it makes them available as an opportunity for new and mutual relationships, supporting the compassionate and family-oriented marketing that Puffer reaches for.

As it relates to diving, social networks have proven to communicate the functional, social, and risk values of scuba diving. Specifically, photographs of scuba divers enjoying social activities can strengthen marketing messages at dive resorts. This strengthens the emotional and social aspects of scuba diving, reaffirming scuba divers' notions of social status, uniqueness, and enhances their sense of belonging while reducing any perceived risk (Seymour, 2012). Excellent service as well as the perceived social and emotional values lead to more word-of-mouth marketing intention for visitors, and this comes to play on Puffer' TripAdvisor pages, which already see success with user-generated content that highlights Puffer staff and the social aspects of diving. Visitors that are demonstrating interest in this through their own posting contributions confirm that staff, group cohesion, and connection are values important to the guest experience, and should be highlighted by Puffer itself as well [7f]. The “messy” and “amateur” photos displayed by guests around this are already appealing, though their effects can be strengthened by Puffer contributing to this with visually appealing studio aesthetic photography (Marder, 2021, p. 2). These social values are not a common part of the marketing initiatives of Puffer' local competitors, and already differentiate Puffer—yet these are just some ways they can expand on previous initiatives to make their efforts better-known to the public.

Other “cultural services” could be marketed better. The food is a weakness for Puffer, seeing big losses in 2017 and 2018 [1e, 6]. In addition, the overall guest satisfaction rate for the food across both resorts in 2018 was only 30.5% [8]. Promoting their locally sourced foods and flavors increases consumer awareness pre-arrival, possibly even encouraging them afterwards to venture out and support local businesses and workers as well. Even incorporating it into planned rates available on the website can guarantee sales and/or knowledge of the option. In the case of marketing tourism in Barbados, moving beyond sun, sand, and sea-based marketing to culinary experiences allowed campaigning to reach new audiences in North America (DCI, n.d.). A similar strategy could be applied to Puffer’s gift shop, were they to increase awareness digitally or in-person about what they sell. By providing and promoting local craftworks for purchase, Puffer would support local artmaking while also being able increase profit margin for the store. These final recommendations strengthen Puffer’ desire to increase sales to guests in house [1e].

### ***Ecosystem connection and sustainability***

This section relies on the previously established definition of development, where humans have had a relationship with the land they occupy, and the resources abundant or lacking within. In looking at sustainability and solutions to sustainability, the analysis is linked in many ways to the previous section. Rallying community around an environmental cause will be strengthened by the implementation of other benefits and services for members. Celebrating the ecological environment here requires investing in it and investing in people that want to support it. Puffer already has a detailed and extensive history in advocating for sustainability and conservation. By focusing more intentionally on it in a community-based manner, they reconnect with their founding vision as a private resort with a public stance against environmental harm.

By including these initiatives more strategically in their marketing, Puffer will be able to communicate their great and important work with a wider audience.

*Informing theories: community-driven sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals*

Tourism development, requiring use of land and ocean for entertainment, causes damage. Investment in sustainable practices works to undo the damage and preserves the environment for long-term use. A need for sustainability and sustainable development comes from a communal noticing that our environment is changing, including the ecological, political, and economic climate (Jackson, 2020). And this sustainable development is an opportunity for both productive activities and social reproduction. While contributing to long-term health and profit benefits deriving from a clean ocean, these are opportunities for communal activities that sustain human relationships and values (Hautzinger, 2002). Previous research from Lucrezi et al. (2017) references the immense effort that creating community-driven sustainability efforts can be in the scuba diving industry. Networks of communication and collaboration around Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) involve managing authorities, local and national governments, academic institutions and NGOS in order to identify proactive solutions the whole system can take to mitigate negative environmental effects. In addition, the scuba industry has skills, knowledge, and assets that are crucial for an ecological community framework. These include marine monitoring, first-hand ecological and mapping knowledge, conservation efforts, and direct involvement in scientific research and clean-up activities. Secondary community cohesion benefits include those referenced in the previous section, including education, revenue, employment, and a pride in work. Efforts need to be integrated, utilizing the skills and engagement of a variety of stakeholders.

The UN sustainable development goals are often highlighted by businesses seeking to promote their good intentions and positive impacts. This analysis does not present this as a strategy for Puffer, as it would not be a very unique strategy for them to employ—however, these strategies help frame an important theoretical contribution to sustainable development. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) cites that tourism has the potential to contribute directly or indirectly to all of the goals but is included as targets for three of the goals. These are decent work and economic growth (#8), responsible consumption and production (#12), and life below water (#14), with life below water as especially crucial for a scuba dive entity. Responsible consumption and production highlight the economic benefit in buying local, again reinforcing cultural development.

Focusing on these three goals respectively trickles down effective benefits to the other goals. Income and tax increase from tourism can be invested in public services around health, education, food, clean water, clean energy, infrastructure. Doing so with a focus on supporting local and social inequities, particularly around gender. These investments in turn can lead to reduced poverty, reduced hunger, sustainable cities and communities, better life on land, climate action, and peace and justice. Crucial to making this all happen is Sustainable Development Goal 17, partnership, which engages multiple stakeholders to ensure a just development (Jackson, 2020). Partnerships will be critical to the new and continued success of sustainability initiatives. The Sustainable Human Development model used by the UN Development Programme in the 1990s highlights key components to be included in these partnerships: empowerment, sustainability of capital (human, physical, environment), productivity, and equity (P. Burns, 1999).

*Analysis and recommendations: Community organization and informative marketing*

Puffer has identified waste disposal, climate change, plastic and garbage in the ocean, and unsustainable fishing practices as threats to their business and ecosystem [1e]. They also desire to understand the opportunities that can arise from responsible and sustainable practices, identifying education, recycling and employment as initial solutions to this [2]. The financial statements for Puffer do not demonstrate any significant investments in the sustainability of the land and ocean around them. They have some initiatives that would not be readily obvious from a financial statement, and these are noted below in the marketing-based analysis. Those initiatives have costs that are assumed day-to-day, when guests use plastic alternatives or when staff cleanings are incurred as part of a salary expense. On average between 2017 and 2019, sustainability initiatives average 1.4% of Puffer's expenses, and are limited to solar, house coral reef repair, gardening, and a fee to a local community organization. The local community organization was designed to ward off illegal mining in Northern Sulawesi, though after their success with the government, has evolved into a community Facebook group focused on sharing out awareness for environmental issues, and getting involved in smaller local initiatives.

Puffer has other involvements, but any financial commitments are not readily available on the financial statements. One of these includes supporting a local Marine Protected Area conservation effort, and another program involves educating locals on coral regeneration and plastic pollution. They reference working with NGOs and the Indonesian government in their pitch materials, but these involvements are not made explicit on other forms of digital communication [5]. More recently during COVID-19, they have added additional focuses to keep their staff engaged and employed. These include an in-house program on growing their own crops and have supported a clean drinking water project initiative that helps local villages obtain

clean drinking water. Both suggest the larger intersectional role that tourism can play in development, if not in returning lands, then in supporting others to make a living off of it. The water initiative, though, is run through another foundation near Platax which gives back to the community and also provides educational and environmental programs. Puffer donates to this foundation but does not seem to have a unifying program (or NGO) of their own—especially near one of their main sites, Goby. Establishing a sustainability-focused group near Goby would be an engaging way to raise awareness of the location to consumers and generate community interest in a community already populated with many private tourism entities.

There's an opportunity for Puffer to simultaneously invest in the ecosystem and emerge as a community leader when it comes to sustainable community organization. Two public-private partnerships (PPPs) are presented here for Puffer to consider. The first engages with the general public and local organizations and seeks to create a communal investment in the surrounding ecosystem. Puffer has already identified a desire to focus on creating environmental or social programs, specifically a Marine Protected Association. They should proceed with this, though also considering that many public-private partnerships of this kind are frequently called on to also contribute to the cultural and economic wellbeing of locals, including access to services. Without knowing the lived experiences of locals, this study recommends that Puffer engage and listen to the community to inquire about what if any social benefits should derive from an environmentally focused partnership. Utilizing systems of community-based tourism, this should allow local citizens to offer input, and emerge as key stakeholders for the future of the ecosystem.

Strong community-based tourism performance leads to increased revisit intention and word-of-mouth marketing from guests, as for many locations community involvement and the



environment have become products for tourist consumption (Han et al., 2019; Picard, 2010). Engaging communities and local organization in these efforts will provide additional marketing points for local businesses to highlight, and although less of a benefit than the healthy ecosystem, still provide an additional benefit for local agents that need incentive to promote Puffer [2]. The second PPP proposed should integrate with a local public university. Holding to the recommendations around staff management, this is not a suggestion to include tourism management and general education. Rather, it should be a means for the community to get involved and provide meaningful research on the changing marine ecosystems and diverse species that occupy them. Puffer did research with a team years ago to make the case against illegal mining, yet many forms of pollution and destruction still exist today, particularly waste in the oceans. The looming and ongoing threat of climate change threatens the entire ecosystem, and snorkel-dive resorts can play a role in the monitoring, evaluation, and preservation of their futures. Both of these PPPs could unify local communities around sustainability initiatives, especially in Goby, where Puffer does not seem to be leading or participating in any pre-existing initiatives.

Puffer's marketing does not utilize the full strength of the marketing initiatives. While they have a decent number of initiatives in place, they are not communicated strongly, frequently or prominently. Signaling corporate social responsibility and sustainability improve revenue performance, and same for the social responsibility and sustainability efforts of the country nationally (Cowan & Guzman, 2018). The previous section highlights a bit more strongly the marketing of social responsibility, but internal sustainable actions could be better communicated by Puffer. Puffer has a number of sustainable initiatives already in-house, including beach cleaning and recycling, solar electricity sources, no plastic straws, no single-use water bottles,

and plastic recycling workshops [4, 7a]. However, these are not given prominence on their website, and not all are frequently highlighted on social media (especially not on their Instagram) and third-party listing sites.

It has been observed as common practice for sites looking for a sustainable edge to dedicate a full page, section, or headline bar to highlight their sustainability initiatives. Puffer has done some market research for sustainable travel and recognize that 72% of travelers want sustainable travel choices while 70% book eco-friendly travel whether or not they were searching for green lodging [4]. Yet, this needs to be incorporated as a sought-after user profile for their digital marketing strategy [3]. In the proposed PPPs, there may even ways for Puffer to include and in turn promote tourists' involvement in their sustainability initiatives. Just as some tourists prefer to give back to local communities by shopping local, eco-conscious tourists may be inclined to give back in a handful of ways. This could include getting involved briefly in some of the day-to-day initiatives, purchasing products whose profits go back into the environment, or simply donating to a locally organized sustainability cause.

Highlighting Puffer's day-to-day initiatives and potential new community organization, particularly with PR coverage, will be a sure way to increase attention through sustainability signals. An excellent example of this is found on a tangential dive website where they are hailed for pioneering sustainability initiatives—yet they should continue to seek additional opportunities for this kind of attention as they reach upscale markets that are further away from Indonesia and the diving community [7g]. In fact, their more elite advertising to a specialized market will differentiate them from mass tourism and minimize the negative effects of mass tourism. Examples of this, as introduced through a PPP above, include participatory programs around research for visitors. This includes programs to monitor and map dive zones, or diving

that focuses on education, training, and interpretation regarding ecological research. These experiences will differentiate Puffer, contribute to a greater body of knowledge, and provide an additional incentive for divers to return as specialists (Lucrezi et al., 2019).

### *Place-based pilgrimage and frontiers*

This section takes a step back, heavily grounding itself in tourism and anthropology. It examines some of the early discourses around tourism and then provides modern application to scuba dive marketing. In searching for frontiers on pilgrimage-esque travel, this explains why a sense of adventure and the unknown are particularly salient for a scuba dive resort. People and place, the focus of the previous two sections, are briefly touched upon here, as they contribute to notions of novelty and escapism that drive tourists' travel. Often, "escape" for a tourist will be driven by a desire to meet people with vastly different lived experiences, and a search for a pristine natural environment. By tapping into immersive marketing that creates a sense of adventure and escapism, Puffer will tap into key marketing insights for the tourism industry.

### *Informing theories: Round-trip pilgrimage and the lure of the unknown*

Place-based pilgrimage and frontiers are concepts highly integrated into anthropology but have their place in adventure and recreation tourism. In part, pilgrimage and frontiers are historically bound to innovations in travel. The development of the railway for example, changed how people perceive the time of space and travel, creating a panorama-zation of the world around travelers. This allowed for marketing of places and destinations to seem more attainable, as print media was able to objectify and emphasize locations in a variety of advertising mediums (Yamashita, 2004, pp. 14-15). Land was transformed into landscape, more accessible for tourists

to ascribe aesthetic and symbolic values to it (Picard, 2010, p. 143). But shared knowledge of travel was not made novel by new technologies, only increasingly commodified.

Pilgrimage, with a long and religious history is similar to tourism in that it has the power to “move vast peoples, transform economies, and disseminate political and even religious messages” (Bowie, 2006, p. 238). Durkheim (1912) informs pilgrimage with the notion of the profane and the sacred, placing pilgrimage, travel, and tourism as an escape from the ordinary into something special and imbued with meaning. Travel is pilgrimage in that there is departure, a liminal and sacred trip, and a return to the ordinary, which easily have semiotic meaning attached to it (Picard, 2010). Travel for the working class is a means to break routine in a number of ways: running out of cares and running out money; creating a break from the work routine in a setting filled with notions of excitement and control; stepping aside from societal bounds; having unique and different social interactions; feeling a heightened intensity; release from daily life; transitional personal reflection (P. Burns, 1999; Graburn, 2010). These are the inherent push and pull factors that push the tourist away from home and pull them towards a destination (Dann, 1977; Said & Moryono, 2018).

Tourists are both pushed and pulled to a notion of frontiers—even when they repeat a visit to a destination, they travel to a place that sends them to an idealized, distant mental state. But more often than not, these frontiers give a deceptive sense of virginal unexploredness, presenting feelings of isolation and preserved lands to tourists even though the development has likely displaced local peoples (Hautzinger, 2002, p. 362). MacCannell (2011) positions sightseeing as “something deeper...one of the most individualized, intimate, and effective ways we attempt to grasp and make sense of the world and our place in it” (p. 6). For MacCannell, sightseeing is an innate human quality that takes place in our unconscious, independent of

demographic variables. This focus is driven by a “search for authenticity,” where in people we search for untouched tradition in a globalized world and seek remote and alien scenes to strengthen human connection with nature (MacCannell, 2011, p. 14; V. Smith, 1977).

For some, desires and aversions towards risk and fear inform reasons to travel, and this is true to a point for those engaging in scuba tourism (Plog, 1974). There's inherent risk and reward just in trying to reach a destination, as tourists balance expectations, hopes, and fears for what they find upon arrival. Even in marketing, commercial imagery creates idealized versions of bodies and destinations, a frontier so distant from lived reality (MacCannell, 2011). Tourists fantasize about those empty beaches—the sand, the sun, the sea (the sex)—and want to be there, and highly anticipate these visions along the way. There is a market for risk, for adventure, for escape, and for all the unknowns that occur when we leave the profane in search of the sacred. Marketing these qualities is a marketing of the internal and inherent views of the tourists, especially for a dive resort, which has the fascinations and unknowns of the ocean to present as well. Tourists wish to leave their home and desire an attraction that will magically overwhelm them and they anticipate returning home having experienced said change, often wanting to manifest change back in their own environment (Graburn, 2010; MacCannell, 2011).

*Analysis and recommendations: Immersive storytelling and LinkedIn*

What's so sacred about Puffer Dive? For starters, the wildlife that lives on local land, and under the waters. Puffer has a knowledgeable dive team and access to a variety of titillating dive locations that are teeming with wildlife. They understand their market for this too. They seek divers, snorkelers, solo travelers, underwater photographers, and families—the majority all adventure-driven, with the latter escape-driven [1e, 3]. Puffer' market research highlights that

adventure tourism is a trillion-dollar industry, and that reef-diving in Indonesia is a billion-dollar industry, both generous markets with plenty of revenue to be captured [4].

The website journey struggles to communicate the various adventure and escapist sources, with tours and deep diving information hard to find, making it difficult to learn about all the profit sources that provide adventure and authenticity to the consumer [7a]. The website features good use of visual and written imagery, though the overall “boxed-in” design doesn’t allow the user to visualize the destination in a way that is immersive. It could also benefit from more photos in general, especially those empty scenic ones featured on their TripAdvisor. While this is a component of mass tourism, it will be up to Puffer to price their services higher to reach that luxury market. Their snorkeling site, which features full-screen imagery and a more modern design, does this well and should serve as an example to the main site [7a, 7b]. Their pitch pack, which has strong design and transferability to a magazine print ad, is filled with enticing language and compelling imagery that should be utilized across more platforms. Here’s what they write:

Located close to the equator and in the heart of the Coral Triangle, North Sulawesi abounds with nature. From the crystal clear, warm tropical seas to the lush rainforests and mangroves, there are endless opportunities for adventure. Our vibrant coral reefs are bursting with color and teeming with life. Dolphins play alongside our boats, schools of reef fish swim just beneath the surface and some of the world’s rarest and most unusual marine species await you. Our team of professional instructors and guides are marine biology trained to enhance your experience underwater, and on land, your adventure continues. Black Macaques live in troops and the world’s smallest primate, the tarsier monkey, can be seen leaping from tree to tree. Other highlights include cuscus bears and

rare butterflies and birds. The fertile Minahasan highlands combine volcanic peaks and immense crater lakes with waterfalls and geothermal hot springs. [5]

This language is compelling for a variety of reasons. It is rich with descriptors, but also references the strength of their staff, and introduces a couple of Puffer's profit centers. Puffer has considered offering more to guests, yet they should continue focusing instead on upsell and cross-sell opportunities. Though not a significant chunk of revenue, the gift shop and massage center tie into notions of liminality and escapism, the former offering a reminder of a trip taken and the later allowing for more temporary indulgence. It also demonstrates knowledge, and epistemic value is one of the most important perceived values to scuba tourists. Experiencing newness and indulging curiosity are important to divers, and they will deliberately seek experiences that seem novel and different when booking (Seymour, 2012). A website-specific tool proven to achieve this is website photo galleries, complemented with rich descriptive text. This is something they do well on their Instagram, highlighting the diverse and intriguing species that staff and visitors have seen on dives. Their Instagram strategy can be strengthened by additionally focusing on other aspects that stir a sense of adventure and escapism, particularly the landscape and lodging at the resort [7d].

A key new strategy for Puffer will be increased marketing, even paid ads, on LinkedIn. Puffer has begun to use LinkedIn as a marketing platform, but with infrequent posts [7e]. The content can include materials similar to their Instagram, focused on marine life and its depths. There's an angle to be played for (appropriately and truthfully) highlighting areas from the previous two sections, namely people, community and sustainability. These are common themes for LinkedIn clickbait, and the true adventure and escapism will rest on the fact the content exists on a platform geared towards professional development. By clicking and seeking to learn about a

place and ecosystem that likely has little to do with their LinkedIn use, LinkedIn users are provided a moment in the day to momentarily escape—and put travel and consumption in their mind. In their minds, an “incidental vicarious consumption of travel” occurs, which leads to compensatory consumption behaviors that are tied up in notions of symbolism, dissociation, escapism, and fluid consumption for the tourist (Marder et al., 2019).

Marketing on LinkedIn allows Puffer to organically target content to existing customers that know about Puffer or used paid advertising to reach a niche and higher-priced market. Their high-resolution videos are a great way to go about this, as they use compelling imagery to create a sense of adventure and escapism, while also highlighting the staff and sustainability efforts. Their target market for these campaigns is an ever-growing authentic travel demand market, those seeking luxury accommodations at lesser visited destinations, with some hopes for giving back to the community. These tourist demands illuminate how notions of frontier pilgrimage and culture contact can relate back to the previous two sections. For tourists, a sense of adventure and escapism are often associated with desires to meet local people and contribute to conservation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In combining tourism development theory, previous tourism research in Indonesia, and three anthropological concepts, this case study provided an analysis and recommendations for improving internal strategy and marketing for Puffer Dive Resorts in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. It's important to re-emphasize that all of the recommendations made here will in fact be presented to Puffer. If implemented or entertained, the internal strategies recommended to them may create some frustration and will require more work for them ahead. Re-evaluating staff treatment and benefits, the role of staff culture, and the implementation of cohesive long-term



PPPs are not easy and will require expenses. But these are changes that have the potential to financially benefit Puffer in the long run through increased PR, better customer relationships leading to return visits, and protecting the overall sustainability of the community and environment. Internally, these strategies will guide Puffer to continue and expand aligning with their founding mission as they renovate their resort, and reconsider their market.

The marketing initiatives presented here used anthropologically based theories of culture contact, land and sustainability, and the liminal frontier to illustrate how Puffer can connect marketing to broad concepts about human perception. People want to travel to experience something refreshing, a break from the profane—for Puffer, this looks like tropical paradise where meaningful relationships are formed, local cuisines is enjoyed, sustainability is important, and the ecosystem is overwhelmingly filled with wildlife. At the core of these recommendations, though using anthropology, is a desire for Puffer to identify and harness in their strategic communication pillars. Specifically, this can be done with a focus on celebratory storytelling: unique and memorable staff, community-based sustainability, and the natural wonderful world. Doing so will be most effective through nice high-end PR and print ad placements, and position Puffer to emerge as the boutique resort they seek to be post-renovation.

These marketing recommendations have two other objectives, the first being a hopeful connection back to the founding story of Puffer—one grounded in community support, sustainability, and general diving adventure. The second is to more actively and collaboratively engage the narrative for how their resort and staff are perceived, mediating visitors' expectations pre-arrival to limit negative effects of culture contact for the local community. Both the strategy and marketing focused initiatives tie into a new concept from Riley (2021), which describes externally empowered visions. An externally empowered vision is “a vision that imagines what

the world could become as a result of human flourishing.” It is in this type of communication, business model, and overall objectives that allow companies to acknowledge the great people, work, and initiatives done so far, while motivating new and different participants to get involved in the change-making. The language of this vision, though grounded in business, has deep ties to anthropology for me—through big picture visioning and imagining where we are collectively going, we can begin the work of sound and equitable tourism development.

The interdisciplinarity of this paper presents a limitation of the study, as it made organization of concepts difficult, often only brushing the surface of the respective subject area. And the focus of analysis was unique, especially for Indonesia and a non-remunerated consulting project. Rather than surveying locals or tourists themselves, the study dissected the decisions, financials, and presentation of a private entity dive resort through the materials they chose to provide. The decision to do this was ultimately due to the limitations of COVID-19, to include travel implications. Another limitation would be the choice not to conduct interviews or consider individual subjects, allowing the Puffer business and surrounding community to focus on their day-to-day work in the midst of a pandemic. COVID aside, this paper was interested in asking, *How can responsibility be placed on private developments—what decisions can they make to increase revenue but contribute to the greater community?* Furthermore, this places an extreme importance on mediators, me in this case, to provide external recommendations that grapple with local history and business analysis from an independent, third-party perspective. Of course, these are limited to the theoretical frames I chose, and my own biased experience in business especially around what is considered good and effective marketing.

At best, the case analysis identifies meaningful pivots and strategies for Puffer as they scale up, while also generating community impact. At worst, the analysis provides a meaningful

number of leap-off points for integrating anthropology and business to analyze and begin to dream of structured change in tourism development. Perhaps this is most helpful in situations where tourism developers want to do good but have minimal resources or infrastructure to conduct integrated and systematic studies. As Chambers (1997) writes, "Tourism is a mediated activity, subject to a wide variety of interpretations and interventions" (p. 4). The same study and data would lend itself a very different analysis to any other researcher. This study has a variety of future potential research points that could elaborate on or add in a number of research methods. Quantitative analysis could further investigate the branding and pricing for local competitors or analyze the effectiveness of the different marketing streams. Qualitative research could analyze the perceptions of tourists to Puffer's marketing and PR initiatives or survey the community to identify how to create more value for them through trainings and partnerships.

If any of the recommendations are taken to heart by Puffer, the effectiveness of their implementation could be studied years down the road in a post-COVID climate. This would be particularly salient in an A/B test format for the Goby property, which experienced cost disease through declining profits in 2019. Tourism is dynamic, requiring constant innovation while handling changing perceptions of the community. Even if I myself were to run this study again five years down the line I would yield a different analysis, as the nature of culture, sustainability, COVID-19, tourism development, and Puffer itself change. Tourism on the international level is an enjoyable and wonderful privilege, yet fraught with the ill effects of contact, development, and environmental damage. Third-party mediation, continuous scrutiny, rigorous innovation, scrupulous imagination, celebration, and dynamic partnerships are presented here as various means of enacting change that can sustainably integrate tourism growth and development alongside local communities.

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