

TOURISM VILLAGE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: FORMS, BENEFITS, STRATEGIES AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VILLAGE

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Abstract:

Tourism villages in Indonesia are generally a form of rural community-based tourism that aims to benefit local communities, so the role of community participation is very important to preserve and promote local culture and traditions. This research aims to explore the importance of community participation in the development of Asinan Tourism villages, including both benefits, strategies for fostering participation and obstacles to participation. The research method used was qualitative research with village government informants, tourism village institutions, tourism actors, MSME community groups, guides and transportation providers. The results of the study show that the people of Asinan village have participated through active participation in various institutions supporting tourist villages, as providers of attractions, amenities and accessibility. The benefits obtained are the preservation of traditions and culture, economic opportunities and environmental preservation. The strategy carried out in increasing participation is to provide an understanding of tourism villages, funding, training, community involvement in ideas and decisions, and increasing the role of village governments. Some of the obstacles to fostering community participation include a lack of understanding of the benefits of tourism villages, reluctance to change, concerns about exploitation and lack of resources and infrastructure.

Keywords: Community Participation, Tourism Awareness Group, Tourism Actor, Tourism Organization

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INTRODUCTION

Village Tourism is a form of tourism that involves visiting and staying in a village to experience the local culture, traditions and way of life. Travelers have the opportunity to experience living in an authentic and natural village environment, away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Travelers on a village tour get the opportunity to interact with local people, participate in traditional activities, and learn about the culture and environment of rural areas (Gao & Wu, 2017; Yanan et al., 2024). This type of tourism is growing in popularity as more people seek authentic and meaningful travel experiences that allow them to connect with nature and local communities.

Village tourism in Indonesia is generally a form of rural community-based tourism that aims to benefit local communities in developing countries by allowing tourists to visit and engage with them (Gao & Wu, 2017). Rural tourism activities often involve agrarian-based economies, traditional communities, and small settlements, which reflect the characteristics of rural areas (Okech et al., 2012). Even village women play an important role in the culinary industry and other business activities associated with village tourism (Yanan et al., 2024). Village heads and other informal leaders are critical to ensuring the sustainability of village tourism activities (Yanan et al., 2024). Strong community ties and collaboration between residents and village government are essential for sustainable tourism development (Phoochinda, 2018; Moaaz et al., 2021; Yeoman et al., 2007).



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Village tourism is a tourist activity to witness the daily life of the village community, so the role of community participation is very important. Community participation is very important for the reason that it helps preserve and promote local culture and traditions, in order to maintain cultural activities, such as art performances, festivals, and heritage preservation projects, authenticity and special characteristics of an area or community (Solehudin, 2024). Community participation also leads to sustainable development and economic growth in rural areas, by providing a source of income for villagers while maintaining their way of life. By actively involving local communities in village tourism, tourists can have a more enriching and rewarding experience that benefits both visitors and residents (Heykal et al., 2024).

Community involvement in tourism activities ensures that benefits are shared among all members and the authenticity of the experience is maintained. In addition, community participation can help empower locals and provide them with opportunities for economic growth and development. Interactions between communities and tourists can provide a deeper understanding of local customs and practices, while supporting the livelihoods of the Community.

In addition to the community, the role of government involvement in preserving local wisdom and traditions is very important for sustainability and cultural heritage. Collaborative governance between the government and local communities is key to empowering communities and developing tourism customs based on local expertise (Solehudin, 2024). This collaborative approach not only enables a more authentic and sustainable tourism experience but also fosters mutual respect and appreciation between visitors and residents. Village tourism can create sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships that benefit both visitors and locals.

However, in some cases, the influx of tourists can lead to over-commercialization and exploitation of local communities. For example, when tour operators prioritize profits over preserving the cultural integrity of the village, it can result in a loss of authenticity and genuine connection between visitors and residents.

Tourism villages in Indonesia are encouraged to conceptualize maximizing local community participation. Asinan Tourism Village, located in Bawen sub-district, Semarang Regency, part of its area as a lake or Rawa Pening, with the livelihood of the community mostly as swamp fishermen. This study aims to explore how forms of community participation in tourism villages, the benefits of community participation, strategies to increase community participation and obstacles faced in fostering community participation for the development of the Asinan tourism village.

METHODS

The research was conducted in Asinan Tourism Village, Bawen Sub-district, Semarang Regency, which is a typical tourism village of Pening Swamp fishermen. The research used a qualitative method approach to explore a number of information from key informants, namely elements of the village government, elements of the tourism village management, both pokdarwis and Bumdes, community tourism businesses incorporated in the tourism MSME association, tour guides, culinary actors, souvenir actors, homestay business actors, and transportation businesses. In addition to in-depth interviews, field observations and document studies were conducted. The results of data collection were analyzed inductively to draw various conclusions in accordance with the problem formulation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION



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Forms of Community Participation in Village Tourism. In order to develop a tourism village in Asinan Village, Bawen, Semarang Regency, the manager seeks to invite community participation to help develop the tourism village. Community participation in Asinan Village includes:

Participation in Tourism Village Supporting Institutions. The community is empowered in the Tourism Village institutions both as administrators and members of the Pokdarwis, BumDes tourism unit managers, PKK administrators who provide food and drink, Karangtaruna activity providers and guides, tourism actor groups, Poklasar (Marketers Group), tour guide groups, tour boat associations, floating stall associations, Sawahan Market MSME groups, art groups, religious and cultural tourism managers and the Regional Consultative Body.

Participation as a tourist attraction provider. The community as an actor participates as a provider of tourist attractions: including educational tours of traditional tourist boat making, making various chips, education, the process of making humic acid planting media made from water hyacinth, making sawdust briquettes, providing fishing activities, providing jeep tour agro-tourism packages in collaboration with Kampoeng Kopi Banaran, educational tours of water hyacinth crafts, genjer crackers, providing art attractions, traditional ceremonies, providing educational attractions for rice planting, strolling the Pontang River, strolling Pening swamp, coffee plantations, and arambakung fisheries. Provider of Grebek Suro tradition, Merti Dusun, Tingkepan, Boyong Dewi Sri. Provider of the art attraction of kuda lumping tani gumebyar creations, and provider of welcome dances to welcome guests.

Cultural Actors. The people of Asinan Village actively participate in various cultural activities that become tourist attractions, such as Merti Dusun, Sedekah Bumi, and Sedekah Rawa. Their participation is also seen in the preservation of historical sites such as inscriptions, temples, shrines, churches and mosques to support religious tourism. In addition, the community also preserves traditional arts, including ketoprak, Langen Budoyo, kuda lumping, kulintang, tambourine, angklung, keroncong, gamelan, sinden, drumblack, and shadow puppet shows. The Nyadran tradition, which involves grave pilgrimages and eating together savory rice and ingkung chicken, is also maintained. These preservation efforts reflect the collective awareness of residents in maintaining cultural heritage while developing the village's cultural tourism potential.

Amenity Provider. The Asinan village community actively participates in the provision of amenities for tourists by providing 20 homestays for overnight guests and live-in activities. As traders during events, selling a variety of drinks, food, toys, clothing, meeting place providers at the Joglo Sabdo Palon traditional house, typical culinary providers at 15 floating stalls, food and beverage providers at Sawahan Market, Rawa Pening souvenir providers, and providing fishing gear. Souvenir providers from water hyacinth materials for crafting baskets, chairs, tissue holders, etc. Providing souvenirs and tour guide services. The community also participates in the provision of clean water facilities, toilets, places of worship, parking and security services.

Accessibility provider. The Asinan village community participates in providing land transportation, namely public transportation that becomes tourist transportation, delman transportation around the village, water tourism transportation, namely boat owners and boat tour drivers, becoming boat tour counter officers, parking lot providers, and organizing jeep tour transportation in collaboration with Kampoeng Kopi Banaran. The forms of community participation in the Asinan Tourism Village can be divided as follows:



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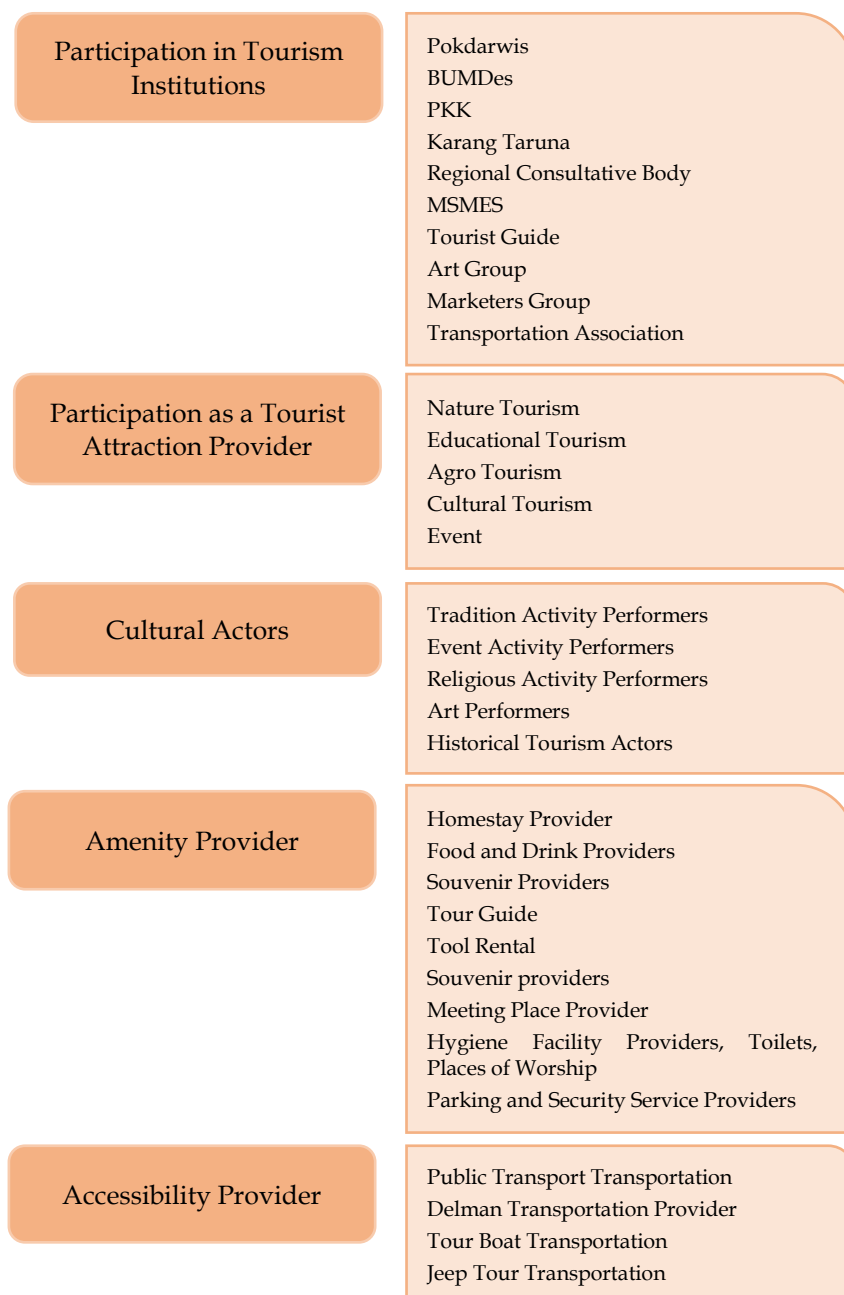


Figure 1. Forms of Community Participation in Tourism Villages

Benefits of Community Participation. From these forms of participation, we can conclude the benefits of participation for local communities:

1. Preserving local culture and traditions
 - a. Community participation plays a role in maintaining the authenticity of the village tourism experience.
 - b. Play a role in utilizing local businesses to support the needs of tourists, including lodging, food and beverages, guides, rentals, and activities.



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- c. Maintaining sustainable tourism practices in preserving the village's cultural heritage.
- d. Build partnerships between tourists, locals, and businesses to produce positive outcomes for all parties involved.
- e. Promote responsible travel behavior among visitors to ensure long-term benefits for communities and tourists.
- f. Promote a more sustainable and responsible approach to travel, ensuring villages continue to thrive economically while preserving unique identities for future generations to enjoy. Travelers not only support the local economy but also gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local way of life.
- g. Implementation of sustainable tourism practices, supporting local businesses and fostering deeper relationships between travelers and the communities they visit.

The results of this study support the opinion of Wong & Fernandhini (2011) on some of the benefits of community participation. By involving local people in cultural activities, such as art performances, festivals, and heritage preservation projects, the authenticity and special characteristics of an area or community can be maintained (Deacon & Smeets, 2013).

2. Empowering the local community economy

- a. The community is empowered in various economic activities to meet the needs of tourists.
- b. The community can enjoy revenue from tourism.
- c. Additional revenue from cultural tourism activities, customs and traditional heritage for tourism.
- d. Encourage social and economic development in rural areas, including providing employment opportunities for residents.
- e. Balancing the economic benefits of tourism with the need to protect the environment and preserve the unique character of rural villages.

The results of this study are in line with the opinion that community empowerment in tourism has an economic impact on local communities (Sulaiman et al., 2022).

3. Preserving the Environment

- a. Maintain sustainable tourism practices in preserving the environment
- b. Helping tourists contribute to the sustainability of village destinations through respectful behavior, environmental conservation efforts.
- c. Community involvement in environmental management, rural tourism to promote sustainable development and preserve cultural heritage for future generations.

Strategies to Increase Community Participation in Village Tourism

1. Through meeting forums with various stakeholders, efforts are made to involve residents in generating ideas, making decisions, creating tourism models that are more inclusive and equitable and benefit residents' bottom-up community-based tourism initiatives in the context of tourism sustainability (Martini, 2020).
2. Strategies to increase community participation by establishing partnerships with local organizations and leaders, who can provide valuable insights and support in planning and implementing tourism activities.
3. The role of Pokdarwis and partners is to provide training and capacity-building programs to residents, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in the tourism industry actively.



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4. Providing opportunities for communities to showcase their cultural heritage and traditional practices can help attract tourists and generate income for communities.
5. Provide opportunities for local businesses to benefit from tourism. Managers ensure tourists contribute to the income of the communities they visit. This can include everything from revenue for local transportation, provision of food and drink, tour guides, educational tours, staying at local homestays, buying handicrafts and souvenirs.
6. Increasing the role of village governments in preserving local wisdom and traditions is critical for sustainability and cultural heritage as well as funding. Deacon & Smeets (2013) state that collaborative governance between the government and local communities is key to empowering communities and developing tourism customs based on local expertise. The role of the Asinan Village Government in increasing community participation by providing funding for Village Tourism. The Village Fund was given to the Kuda Lumping Dance groups by allocating funds for the procurement of a set of gamelan equipment amounting to Rp. 20,000,000 (Twenty Million rupiah). This is a means and motivation, as well as education, for art activists and all residents. The Semarang regency government hopes that Rawa Pening will become a tourism center that can grow the economy of the community around Rawa Pening.

Community participation in village tourism benefits residents by improving overall community well-being, influencing the sustainability of tourism development, and enhancing local welfare. Local community participation in decision-making, knowledge sharing, and empowerment plays an important role in improving destination quality and community well-being in tourism villages (Khalid et al., 2019). Communities also participate in enhancing family entrepreneurship, as well as preserving the unique character and charm of a destination for tourists seeking authentic experiences (Clayton & Boxill, 2012).

Challenges to Community Participation in Village Tourism: Lack of awareness and education about the benefits of tourism. One of the factors inhibiting community participation in village tourism is residents' perceptions of tourism development, which are influenced by their demographics, i.e., age, marital status, and education level, which affect their attitudes towards the local economy and overall quality of life. Younger residents and married individuals tend to have more positive attitudes towards the effects of tourism on the economy and quality of life. The community's unfamiliarity with village tourism leads to a lack of awareness to participate. People do not understand the benefits of village tourism, such as job creation, infrastructure development, and increased revenue for local businesses, so village tourism managers must educate and show evidence of the benefits of communities participating in village tourism.

Residents are willing to support sustainable tourism development if they see important personal benefits such as economic, socio-cultural and infrastructure improvements. The greater the perceived benefits, the higher the support from the community in building a tourism strategy going forward. Tourism development can result in job creation, infrastructure development, and increased revenue for local businesses.

Community Reluctance to change or fear of exploitation. Communities are reluctant to participate because they are worried about the negative impacts of tourism. Concerns about the potential negative effects of increased tourism, such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural appropriation. It is important for community leaders and tourism organizations to address these challenges through targeted outreach and education initiatives, ensuring that residents feel informed and empowered to participate in sustainable tourism practices.



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For this reason, community leaders can help alleviate some of the concerns surrounding tourism. It is also important for tourism organizations to work with residents to develop sustainable practices that minimize negative environmental and cultural impacts. Through collaboration and communication, villages can harness the power of tourism to increase their economic prosperity while preserving their unique heritage and natural resources.

Community leaders and managers can initiate open dialog and address the concerns of Community members. Tourism organizations need to build trust and foster a sense of ownership among residents. This can reduce resistance and create a more inclusive and mutually beneficial relationship between tourists and local communities. Involving communities in tourism is expected to foster a sense of pride and ownership among residents, leading to increased participation and engagement with visitors. This can be achieved through collaboration between stakeholders, participatory decision-making, sharing responsibilities and benefits, and building institutional power structures to engage host communities.

Limited resources and infrastructure in rural areas. Another obstacle to participation is funding resources and a lack of infrastructure. There is still a need for various arrangements of tourist village facilities and infrastructure, especially in the Sawahan market area, which has not been well organized. The floating stall area still needs improvement; it is hoped that the improvement can increase the desire of the community to participate in the tourist village.

CONCLUSION

In developing a tourism village, Asinan Village applies community-based tourism by opening a wide door for community involvement and participation in tourism. The Asinan Village community has participated in institutionalization, tourism attraction providers, amenity providers, and accessibility providers. There are a number of benefits from community participation, including the preservation of traditions and culture, economic improvement and environmental preservation. Several strategies have been implemented to increase participation, including funding, training, involvement in ideas and bottom-up decisions, and the role of village government. There are a number of challenges to community participation, including a lack of understanding of the benefits of village tourism, reluctance to change and fear of exploitation, as well as a lack of resources and infrastructure.

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