



Sustainable tourism development digital strategy approach: case study of pokdarwis terong creative tourism village, Belitung Rege

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the development of sustainable tourism in the Terong Creative Tourism Village, with a focus on a holistic approach involving digitalization strategies with the aim of being an effective communication approach and able to provide social innovation and community empowerment. Through this holistic approach to outcome, various strategic elements interact and support each other in achieving sustainable tourism development goals. The results show that involving local communities in every stage of planning and implementing tourism projects with a digital approach is key to success, by ensuring the relevance, acceptance, and sustainability of the initiative. The use of digital technologies has played a crucial role in improving operational efficiency, expanding market reach, and strengthening sustainable practices. Social innovation has also been proven to have an added value impact on the tourism experience and strengthen community involvement in sustainable tourism development. Community empowerment is a key foundation in achieving success in sustainable tourism development, by prioritizing capacity building, training, and fair profit sharing. In conclusion, this holistic and adaptive approach ensures that tourism remains sustainable and relevant to changing market dynamics and socio-economic conditions. Sustainable collaboration between all stakeholders is also the key to success in sustainable tourism development in the future.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The decline in the number of domestic tourist trips in 2019 is an indication of the vulnerability of the tourism sector to unexpected external and internal factors. Factors such as changes in economic conditions, natural disasters, and socio-political dynamics have the potential to affect the mobility and interest of tourists. This highlights the need for a more adaptive and sustainable strategy in tourism development. In addition, the dominance of tourists from Java Island in the national tourism map creates inequality in

the distribution of economic benefits generated by this sector. The tourism potential in other regions, especially in tourist villages that have their own uniqueness and attractions, has not been fully optimized.

One example is the Terong Creative Tourism Village located in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. This village has a variety of unique tourism potentials, ranging from natural beauty, handicrafts, to rich local culture. However, like many other tourist destinations outside Java, Terong Creative Tourism Village faces similar challenges. Internal factors such as limited infrastructure, insufficient promotion, and lack of local investment may hinder its ability to attract more tourists. External factors like economic downturns or national travel restrictions further compound these issues. Addressing these vulnerabilities by improving access, offering diversified tourism products, and leveraging local strengths would be essential to attract more domestic tourists and ensure long-term sustainability for tourism villages like Terong. However, without the right strategy, this potential has not been able to attract a significant number of tourists (Dolnicar, 2012; Pike, 2020). Market diversification and promotion of tourist destinations outside Java are strategic steps needed to ensure a more equitable distribution of economic benefits. For this reason, a more holistic approach is needed in tourism development that not only focuses on marketing aspects (Cheung et al., 2020), but also includes social innovation and local community empowerment. Based on the above background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: How to develop sustainable tourism in the Terong Creative Tourism Village through a holistic approach involving digitalization strategies, social innovation, and community empowerment? This approach is expected to be able to answer existing challenges and provide comprehensive solutions to increase the tourism attractiveness of the village and expand market reach.

The problem-solving approach used in this study is a holistic approach that integrates several key strategies, namely digitalization strategies, social innovation, and community empowerment (Rocca & Zielinski, 2022; Sugandini et al., 2018). Digitalization here includes the use of information and communication technology as an effective communication tool to promote the Terong Creative Tourism Village (Rashmeet & Kush, 2021). The development of digital platforms such as informative and interactive websites and mobile apps can help tourists in planning their visits (Chen et al., 2021). Social media will also be used to the maximum to reach a wider audience and promote activities and tourist attractions in the village (Jaakkola et al., 2015). Social innovation involves the development of programs and activities that aim to improve the quality of life of local communities. Through active participation in tourism activities, people can experience direct economic benefits from this sector (Vegheş, 2018). Training and education programs will be provided to improve people's skills and knowledge in managing and developing tourism (Tranggono et al., 2021). Community empowerment is at the heart of this holistic approach, where local communities are involved in every stage of planning and implementing tourism projects. By involving the community, the initiatives implemented are expected to be more relevant and well received. Empowerment also includes support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in the tourism sector, such as handicrafts, culinary, and homestays (Kumar & Ayedee, 2019; Picchio & Toaldo, 2021). This study aims to identify the factors that affect the decline in the number of domestic tourist trips and the dominance of tourists from Java, develop effective digitalization strategies to promote the Terong Creative Tourism Village, develop social innovations that can increase the participation and welfare of local communities, and increase community empowerment in sustainable tourism management.

This research is expected to provide the following practical and theoretical benefits: practically, this research provides guidance for the managers of the Terong Creative Tourism Village in developing digitalization strategies, social innovation, and community empowerment, increasing the awareness of local communities about the importance of sustainable tourism and their role in tourism management, as well as

providing tourism development models that can be applied in other tourism villages in Indonesian. Theoretically, this research adds to the treasure of knowledge in the field of tourism, especially related to the development of sustainable tourism through a holistic approach, and contributes to the study of the role of digital technology in tourism development in tourist villages. With this comprehensive approach, it is hoped that the Terong Creative Tourism Village can develop into a sustainable tourist destination, provide equitable economic benefits, and improve the overall welfare of the local community.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in-depth information about the sustainable tourism development strategy implemented by the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of the Terong Creative Tourism Village. This methodology was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena from the perspective of participants and in a natural context without manipulation (Creswell et al., 2018; Guetterman et al., 2015). Primary data was collected through a series of in-depth interviews with key informants consisting of Pokdarwis members, Tourism Village managers, and representatives from the Belitung Regency Tourism Office. The informants were selected through a purposive sampling technique to ensure that they have first-hand knowledge and experience related to sustainable tourism development in the village (Patton, 2015). However, it is important to consider whether the number of informants adequately represents all relevant parties, including local residents who are not directly involved with Pokdarwis. Ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives, especially from the local community, is crucial in understanding the broader impact of sustainable tourism development. In addition, participatory observations are conducted to gain a better understanding of social interactions, practices, and dynamics in tourism development (Amin & Rahmiati, 2021). Secondary data was obtained from related documents, such as reports on Pokdarwis activities, documentation of tourism activities, and publications of the Belitung Regency Tourism Office.

Data analysis is carried out using content analysis techniques, which includes several important steps. First, the process begins with initial coding, where data from interviews and observations are systematically broken down into smaller parts to identify recurring patterns and ideas. After that, these codes are grouped and organized to identify key themes, a step referred to as theme identification. Finally, the data is categorized based on these themes, allowing researchers to make connections and understand how the principles of sustainable tourism are implemented and how they impact the development of the Terong Creative Tourism Village.

These findings can be related to the decline in domestic tourist trips in Indonesia, as broader external and internal factors also influence the sustainability and success of smaller tourist destinations like the Terong Creative Tourism Village. Internal factors such as limited infrastructure, lack of promotional efforts, or insufficient local investment may hinder the village's potential to attract tourists. Externally, fluctuations in economic conditions, travel restrictions, or national tourism trends can also affect visitor numbers. Addressing these vulnerabilities with a focus on adaptive strategies, like those explored in this study, could help mitigate the impact of these factors and promote sustainable growth in rural tourism destinations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



This study shows that the development of sustainable tourism in the Terong Creative Tourism Village not only prioritizes environmental aspects, but also prioritizes the use of effective communication as a tool to promote destinations. The right communication strategy, through various media platforms, plays an important role in informing a wider audience about the potential of tourism and sustainability initiatives, as well as educating tourists about the importance of preserving the environment and local culture (Nam & Kang, 2022; Papageorgiou et al., 2020). The use of appropriate language and messaging in tourism promotion can influence the perception and decision of tourists to visit a destination, which ultimately increases tourist visits and awareness of the importance of sustainability (Azazi & Shaed, 2020).

Furthermore, digitalization has become one of the main pillars in the sustainable tourism development strategy of the Terong Creative Tourism Village. Digitalization, including digital marketing and the use of social media, has become a highly effective tool for reaching a wider and more diverse audience (Hariyati & Sovianti, 2019). The integration of digital technology in tourism management allows Terong Village to offer a richer and more interactive experience to visitors, as well as facilitate the booking process and the provision of information related to tourism activities (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019). This digitalization is not only about promotion, but also about creating added value and enriching the traveler's experience while in the destination. For instance, quantitative data collected from the village's digital marketing strategy shows the village's website traffic increased by 35%, and social media engagement rise by 45%, indicating the growing influence of digital platforms in attracting tourists.

Local community empowerment is another crucial aspect identified in this study as part of a sustainable tourism development strategy (Pranita et al., 2022). Involving local communities in the development and management of tourism not only supports the preservation of natural and cultural resources but also contributes to the growth of the local economy. Empowered communities tend to invest more in maintaining the sustainability and success of tourism initiatives, creating a positive circle that benefits both tourist destinations and local residents (Adiyia et al., 2015). This involvement includes participation in decision-making to the development of tourism products that display the unique identity and local wisdom of the Terong Creative Tourism Village.

An in-depth interview with members of the Pokdarwis of the Terong Creative Tourism Village opened new insights into the effectiveness of digital strategies in tourism development. Based on their experience, the adoption of digital technology and social

media has been the main key in promoting the village as an attractive and sustainable tourist destination (Rashmeet & Kush, 2021). The use of social media, in particular, has played an important role in the marketing strategy of the Terong Creative Tourism Village. By leveraging the power of visuals and the ease of sharing on platforms like Instagram, this tourist village has managed to attract the attention of a younger and wider audience (Ge, 2019). The content shared not only focuses on the natural beauty and uniqueness of the local culture, but also on sustainability initiatives and activities that involve the local community. In 2024, Instagram followers of Terong Creative Tourism Village increased by 30%, while posts related to sustainability and community activities saw an average engagement rate of 12%.

This overall digitalization effort reaffirms the potential of digital technology to transform the way tourist villages market themselves and interact with potential visitors. Community empowerment has become the foundation for the success of sustainable tourism development in the Terong Creative Tourism Village. Through an inclusive and participatory approach, local communities are not only part of the tourism workforce but also active stakeholders in the preservation and development of villages (Peng & Lin, 2016; Sugandini et al., 2018).

A holistic approach involving effective communication strategies, digitalization, social innovation, and community empowerment is essential for the success of sustainable tourism development (Kemanfaatan et al., 2021). The practices that have been implemented in the Terong Creative Tourism Village provide a valuable model for other tourist destinations that wish to develop tourism in a responsible and sustainable way. It offers important insights into how various strategic elements can work together to create tourist destinations that are not only commercially attractive but also support environmental sustainability and community well-being. (Madanaguli et al., 2023; Pranita et al., 2022)

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reveals that sustainable tourism development in the Terong Creative Tourism Village requires continuous collaboration between all stakeholders. The holistic and adaptive approach implemented ensures that tourism remains sustainable and relevant to changing market dynamics and socio-economic conditions. Digitalization plays a significant role in expanding the village's visibility and attracting a wider audience, while social innovation fosters creative solutions that enrich the tourist experience and contribute to sustainability. Moreover, community empowerment ensures that local residents are actively involved in decision-making and benefit economically from tourism activities, which in turn strengthens the village's commitment to sustainable practices. Thus, the Terong Creative Tourism Village stands as a concrete example that sustainable tourism development can be realized through an integrated and holistic approach. Their experiences can provide valuable lessons for other destinations that seek to create or enhance responsible and sustainable tourism experiences.

Limitations: Despite the comprehensive insights gained, this study has some limitations. Firstly, the sample size for the qualitative interviews was limited to key informants directly involved in Pokdarwis, which may not fully represent the perspectives of other community members, particularly those not actively engaged in tourism management. Secondly, the focus on a single tourist village restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-economic or cultural contexts. Lastly, the data used primarily reflects pre-2024 conditions, so further research is needed to capture post-pandemic dynamics in tourism and assess the long-term impacts of digitalization.

Recommendations: Future research should expand the sample size to include a broader range of stakeholders, including local residents who are not directly involved in

tourism operations, to gain a more holistic understanding of the community's role in sustainable tourism. Additionally, conducting similar studies in different regions will provide more comparative insights into the effectiveness of digital strategies and community empowerment in diverse contexts. It is also recommended to further explore the use of advanced digital tools, such as virtual tours or augmented reality, to enhance the tourist experience and sustainability efforts. Lastly, continuous monitoring and assessment of the economic and environmental impacts of tourism should be implemented to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Terong Creative Tourism Village.

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