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Communication Strategies for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism in Sumenep, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism has become an important development paradigm in many regions with diverse natural and cultural tourism resources. Beyond economic growth, sustainable tourism emphasizes environmental conservation, socio-cultural preservation, and community participation in tourism governance. In this context, communication plays a strategic role in shaping destination identity, facilitating stakeholder collaboration, and encouraging community engagement in tourism development. This study examines the role of communication strategies in community-based tourism as an approach to sustainable tourism development in Sumenep Regency, Indonesia. Sumenep possesses significant tourism potential, including coastal tourism, island tourism, cultural heritage tourism, and religious tourism, which collectively contribute to regional tourism development. However, the development of these tourism resources often faces challenges related to limited promotion, uneven stakeholder coordination, and insufficient community participation in tourism communication processes. Using a qualitative literature review approach with thematic analysis, this study explores the relationship between sustainable tourism principles, community-based tourism, and tourism communication. The analysis indicates that communication strategies in community-based tourism emphasize participatory communication, local identity representation, and collaborative engagement among government, tourism stakeholders, and local communities. These communication practices contribute to strengthening tourism governance, improving destination visibility, and supporting sustainable tourism development at the regional level. This study highlights the importance of integrating communication strategies with community participation in tourism development and provides a conceptual contribution to tourism communication studies, particularly in the context of emerging regional tourism destinations.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, tourism communication, participatory communication, regional tourism development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the strategic sectors in regional development, particularly in areas with diverse natural, cultural, and heritage resources. In many developing regions, tourism is not only viewed as an economic sector but also as a medium for cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development. The concept of sustainable tourism has emerged as a global paradigm emphasizing the balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and socio-cultural sustainability. Sustainable tourism aims to meet the needs of current tourists and host communities while safeguarding opportunities for future generations through responsible management of tourism resources [1] . This perspective positions tourism development not merely as an economic activity but as a long-term social and environmental commitment.

Within this framework, communication plays a central role in shaping tourism development processes. Communication contributes to destination image formation, stakeholder coordination, community participation, and tourism promotion strategies. Tourism development increasingly relies on communication practices that connect local communities, government institutions, and tourism industries in collaborative relationships. In sustainable tourism discourse, communication is not only instrumental in marketing destinations but also in facilitating participatory development and strengthening local identity representation.

One important approach in sustainable tourism development is community-based tourism (CBT). CBT emphasizes the involvement of local communities in tourism planning, management, and benefit distribution. This model places communities at the center of tourism development and encourages empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability [2] . Historically, the idea of community participation in

tourism development can be traced back to Murphy's community approach to tourism, which highlights the importance of local initiative, local benefits, and tourism development aligned with community values [3] . As an alternative to mass tourism, CBT is widely recognized as a strategy to improve community welfare while maintaining sustainability in tourism destinations [4] .

In the Indonesian context, regional tourism development has increasingly adopted sustainable and community-based approaches. One region with significant tourism potential is Sumenep Regency, located in the eastern part of Madura Island, East Java. Sumenep possesses a wide range of tourism resources, including coastal tourism, island tourism, religious tourism, and cultural heritage tourism. The region consists of a mainland area and more than one hundred small islands, providing diverse tourism attractions and cultural landscapes [5]. Studies indicate that Sumenep has one of the largest numbers of tourism destinations in Madura, with at least twenty-five tourism destinations and tourist villages with different typologies, including natural-based, cultural-based, and creative-economy-based tourism [6] .

Tourism development in Sumenep has shown positive growth in recent years. Statistical data indicate a significant increase in domestic tourist visits, reaching more than 1.3 million visitors in 2023, representing an increase of over thirty percent compared to the previous year [7] . Several destinations such as religious heritage sites, coastal tourism areas, and island tourism destinations have contributed to this growth. For example, heritage and religious tourism sites such as Asta Tinggi and the Sumenep Palace area remain among the most visited destinations in the region [8] . Meanwhile, coastal tourism destinations such as Lombang Beach and island tourism areas like Gili Labak continue to develop as important tourism attractions [9].

However, despite the region's tourism potential and visitor growth, challenges remain in optimizing tourism development. Research on tourism development in Madura shows that many tourism destinations still experience limited promotion, uneven visitor distribution, and insufficient integration between tourism stakeholders [8]. Coastal tourism potential, for example, has not been fully utilized despite being prioritized in regional tourism planning. This condition reflects a gap between tourism potential and tourism development outcomes.

This situation illustrates the das sein condition — tourism resources in Sumenep are abundant and diverse, but their development has not been fully supported by integrated communication strategies and community participation. Meanwhile, the das sollen perspective emphasizes that sustainable tourism development should involve participatory communication, collaborative stakeholder engagement, and community empowerment through tourism activities. In this sense, communication becomes a strategic element in connecting tourism potential with sustainable development goals.

From a communication perspective, tourism development requires not only infrastructure and policy support but also effective communication strategies that involve local communities in tourism promotion and governance. Community participation in tourism communication contributes to strengthening destination identity, improving tourism governance, and supporting sustainable tourism development. Communication also enables collaboration between government, tourism actors, and communities in developing tourism destinations that are socially inclusive and culturally rooted.

Based on these considerations, this paper aims to examine the role of communication strategies in community-based tourism as a framework for sustainable tourism development in Sumenep, Indonesia. Using a literature review approach, this study synthesizes theoretical perspectives on sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, and tourism communication to understand how communication can support tourism development in local destination contexts. By focusing on Sumenep as a regional tourism setting with diverse tourism resources, this study contributes to tourism communication scholarship, particularly in understanding the relationship between communication, community participation, and sustainable tourism development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism has become an important paradigm in the development of modern tourism. This concept originates from the broader idea of sustainable development, which emphasizes a balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural sustainability. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that takes into account current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while addressing the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment, and local communities [10].

This approach positions tourism as part of a long-term development system rather than merely a short-term economic activity. Sustainable tourism emphasizes the optimal management of natural resources, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the improvement of local community welfare [11].

Bramwell and Lane explain that the concept of sustainable tourism emerged as a response to tourism development models that prioritize growth without adequately considering environmental and social impacts. From this perspective, tourism development should maintain a balance between economic growth and the protection of natural and cultural resources for future generations [12].

Butler's study also indicates that sustainable tourism has developed since the discourse on sustainable development emerged in the late twentieth century, positioning tourism as a multidimensional system that

encompasses both the physical environment and the human social environment [13].

Thus, sustainable tourism is not only related to environmental conservation but also encompasses social, economic, and cultural dimensions in the management of tourism destinations.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-based tourism (CBT) is one of the important approaches in the implementation of sustainable tourism. CBT emphasizes the active participation of local communities in the planning, management, and distribution of tourism benefits. This approach aims to ensure that tourism development provides direct benefits to local communities and supports community empowerment.

The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) can be traced back to the work of Murphy (1985), who introduced a community-oriented approach to tourism development. Murphy emphasized the importance of local initiatives, economic benefits for local communities, and tourism development that is aligned with the environment and the cultural values of the community [3].

Community-based tourism (CBT) subsequently developed as an alternative to mass tourism, which often overlooks the welfare of local communities. Research indicates that CBT functions as a strategy to enhance community welfare, strengthen community empowerment, and promote the sustainability of tourism [4].

Giampiccoli (2018) emphasizes that community-based tourism (CBT) is closely related to social justice, the equitable distribution of economic benefits, local ownership in the tourism sector, and community empowerment in the management of tourism destinations [14].

Moreover, community-based tourism (CBT) is regarded as an approach capable of integrating economic, social, and cultural sustainability in the development of tourism destinations [4].

Thus, community-based tourism (CBT) has become an important model in the development of sustainable tourism, as it positions local communities as the main actors in the process of tourism destination development.

Communication in Tourism Development

In the development of modern tourism, communication plays a strategic role in shaping destination images, promoting tourism, and coordinating stakeholders. Tourism communication is not only related to destination marketing but also involves the representation of local identity, community participation, and tourism governance.

The concept of destination branding explains how tourism destinations build identity and reputation in order to attract visitors. Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride explain that tourism destinations adopt branding strategies similar to those used for commercial products to differentiate themselves and to build emotional connections with tourists [15].

Destination branding functions as a communication tool that shapes tourists' perceptions of a particular place. Strong branding can enhance a destination's reputation and strengthen its competitiveness in the tourism sector [16].

In the context of community-based tourism, communication also serves as a participatory mechanism that connects local communities, government institutions, and tourism industry stakeholders. Communication enables collaboration in the management of tourism destinations and strengthens local cultural identity in tourism promotion.

Furthermore, local communities play an important role in shaping the image of tourism destinations, as the community itself constitutes an integral part of the authentic tourism experience [4].

Thus, communication becomes an essential element in the development of sustainable tourism, particularly in fostering community participation, strengthening destination identity, and supporting collaborative tourism governance.

Based on the theoretical review above, the development of sustainable tourism requires the integration of the principles of sustainable tourism, the community-based tourism approach, and tourism communication strategies. Sustainable tourism provides the normative framework for destination development, CBT offers a participatory community-based approach, while communication functions as a connecting mechanism among stakeholders in tourism development.

The integration of these three concepts indicates that communication is not merely a tool for tourism promotion but also a strategic element in the development of sustainable and community-based tourism destinations.

3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach to examine communication strategies in community-based tourism for sustainable tourism development. The literature review method was selected to synthesize conceptual discussions and previous studies related to sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, and tourism communication.

The literature collection process was conducted through academic databases, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and open-access journal repositories. The keywords used in the literature search included "sustainable tourism," "community-based tourism," "tourism communication," "participatory communication," and "regional tourism development."

The inclusion criteria for literature selection were:

1. Scholarly publications related to sustainable tourism and tourism communication;
2. Peer-reviewed journal articles and academic books;
3. Publications published between 2015 and 2025; and
4. Studies relevant to community participation and tourism development.

Meanwhile, publications unrelated to tourism communication and non-academic sources were excluded from the analysis.

The collected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques [17], , involving literature categorization, theme identification, and conceptual synthesis. This approach enabled the study to identify recurring themes regarding communication strategies in community-based tourism and sustainable tourism development.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Communication and Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development requires not only infrastructure, policy support, and economic investment, but also effective communication among stakeholders involved in tourism governance. Communication plays an important role in shaping tourism narratives, promoting destinations, facilitating collaboration, and encouraging community participation. In sustainable tourism discourse, communication is increasingly recognized as a strategic component in managing tourism resources responsibly and inclusively.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), sustainable tourism development involves coordinated efforts among government institutions, tourism industries, and local communities to ensure long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Communication becomes essential in connecting these actors and aligning their interests in tourism development processes [18].

Bramwell and Lane argue that sustainable tourism governance depends on collaboration among stakeholders and participatory decision-making processes. Communication facilitates this collaboration by enabling dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collective planning in tourism development [19].

In this sense, communication is not limited to tourism promotion but also functions as a governance mechanism in sustainable tourism development.

Community Participation in Tourism Communication

Community participation is a central element in community-based tourism (CBT). The success of CBT depends on the ability of local communities to engage in tourism planning, communication, and destination management. Murphy (1985) emphasizes that tourism development should be rooted in local communities and reflect their values, needs, and cultural identity [20].

CBT encourages participatory communication processes where communities are not only tourism beneficiaries but also tourism communicators. Through communication practices such as storytelling, cultural representation, and local promotion initiatives, communities contribute to shaping destination identity.

Research shows that community participation in tourism communication strengthens destination authenticity and improves tourism sustainability [14].

Participatory communication also supports empowerment processes by allowing communities to express local knowledge, traditions, and cultural heritage within tourism development. This aligns with sustainable tourism principles that emphasize social inclusion and cultural preservation.

Tourism Communication in the Context of Sumenep

The case of Sumenep Regency illustrates how tourism potential and communication practices intersect in regional tourism development. Sumenep is known for its diverse tourism resources, including coastal tourism, island tourism, cultural heritage tourism, and religious tourism. The region's geographical composition, consisting of mainland and island areas, creates opportunities for tourism diversification.

Tourism destinations such as Lombang Beach, Slopeng Beach, Gili Labak Island, the Sumenep Palace, and Asta Tinggi represent different tourism typologies that can be developed through community-based tourism approaches. Previous studies indicate that tourism development in Sumenep continues to grow, supported by increasing tourist visits and local government initiatives in tourism promotion [7].

However, research on tourism development in Madura suggests that tourism promotion and stakeholder coordination remain uneven across destinations [8].

This condition reflects the das sein reality — Sumenep possesses strong tourism potential but still faces challenges in communication strategies, stakeholder collaboration, and community participation in tourism promotion.

From the das sollen perspective, sustainable tourism development in Sumenep requires communication strategies that integrate community participation, destination branding, and collaborative tourism governance. Communication-driven tourism development can strengthen local identity, improve destination visibility, and support sustainable tourism management.

Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride (2012) emphasize that destination branding is fundamentally a communication process that constructs meaning and identity for tourism destinations. Effective tourism communication helps destinations differentiate themselves and build long-term relationships with visitors [15].

In the context of Sumenep, community participation in tourism communication can contribute to strengthening destination branding while preserving local cultural identity. Community-based tourism communication can also support sustainable tourism development by ensuring that tourism promotion reflects local values and community interests.

Thus, integrating communication strategies with community-based tourism provides a conceptual pathway for sustainable tourism development in regional destinations such as Sumenep.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the importance of communication strategies in supporting sustainable tourism development through the framework of community-based tourism (CBT). Sustainable tourism requires not only economic development and destination promotion but also participatory governance, community empowerment, and collaborative stakeholder engagement. In this context, communication functions as a strategic element that connects tourism actors, facilitates participation, and strengthens destination identity.

The literature review shows that sustainable tourism provides a normative framework for responsible tourism development, while community-based tourism offers a participatory approach that places local communities at the center of tourism activities. Tourism communication, meanwhile, serves as a mechanism that enables collaboration between stakeholders, promotes destinations, and represents local cultural identity in tourism development processes.

In the context of Sumenep Regency, tourism resources are diverse and include coastal tourism, island tourism, religious tourism, and cultural heritage tourism. The growth of tourism destinations in the region demonstrates significant potential for sustainable tourism development. However, challenges remain in terms of integrated communication strategies, stakeholder coordination, and community participation in tourism promotion and governance.

This condition reflects the gap between tourism potential and tourism development practices. Strengthening communication strategies within community-based tourism can help bridge this gap by encouraging participatory communication, collaborative tourism governance, and culturally grounded destination branding.

This study contributes conceptually to tourism communication research by emphasizing the role of communication in linking community participation with sustainable tourism development in local destination contexts. Future research is recommended to explore empirical studies on tourism communication practices in regional destinations, particularly in community-based tourism settings.

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