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Integrating Local Wisdom and Community Participation for Resilient Cultural Tourism in Sawarna Beach

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the tension between tourism globalization and efforts to preserve local identity at Sawarna Beach. Amidst massive coastal commercialization, Sawarna Beach emerges as an anomaly capable of maintaining cultural authenticity through the power of customary law. This study aims to analyze the forms of local wisdom integration, identify policy synchronization barriers, and evaluate the effectiveness of participatory communication in building destination resilience. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study method, this research is grounded in the constructivist paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants (Village Head, Customary Leaders, Pokdarwis), participatory observation, and documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana interactive model, with triangulation techniques to ensure validity. The results show that local wisdom at Sawarna Beach has been formalized into Village Regulations requiring tourism asset ownership by local residents, a form of radical Community-Based Tourism (CBT) implementation. However, communication gaps were found between the technocratic local government and the value-oriented indigenous community regarding land sanctity. This study concludes that an integrative communication strategy involving horizontal dialogue ("Rempug Desa") is proven effective in building cultural resilience. The novelty of this research lies in the finding that local wisdom is not merely a heritage of the past, but a strategic communication instrument that functions as "social immunity" for destinations facing global shifts.

Keywords: *Integrative Communication Strategy, Local Wisdom, Community Participation, Cultural Resilience, Sawarna Beach*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ideally, the development of coastal cultural heritage tourism should be grounded in a precise balance between the protection of authentic values and sustainable economic utilization. Such development must prioritize local community sovereignty to ensure that cultural identity is not eroded by commercial interests that are destructive to the local social order. [1] and [2] emphasize that community involvement in every stage of the decision-making chain is an absolute requirement for community-based tourism. In an ideal framework, every tourism policy should reflect local aspirations and maintain the integrity of the cultural ecosystem inherited through generations. [3] adds that local wisdom functions as a bastion of cultural resilience, enabling destinations to remain steadfast amidst the currents of global modernization. The success of this integration is believed to create a competitive advantage for destinations that cannot be replicated by other tourist areas anywhere else in the world. This expectation aligns with the findings of [4] and [5], which emphasize the importance of synergy between local knowledge and participation. An inclusive communication strategy serves as the primary bridge in unifying the diverse interests of policymakers, industry players, and the indigenous communities surrounding the destination.

From an ideal perspective, the communication of cultural identity must be consistently constructed to build a strong destination image while maintaining deep roots of originality. [6] posit that the social reality of tourism is the result of a healthy dialectic between local

residents and tourists through a process of social construction. [7] underscores that maintaining an authentic cultural identity narrative is crucial so that a destination does not lose its meaning due to rigid industrial standardization. Equitable dialogue between managers and the local community should be the primary foundation in every infrastructure development plan in the coastal areas of Banten. [8] asserts that participatory communication is an essential instrument for minimizing potential conflicts of interest that frequently arise in the management of public resources. The stakeholder principle from [9] also requires a fair distribution of benefits for all actors involved in the cultural tourism ecosystem. Furthermore, [10] emphasizes that effective destination marketing can only be achieved if there is alignment between the brand promise and cultural reality. Cohesion between local values and active citizen involvement will increase the destination's resilience in facing future economic crises or natural disasters. Emphasizing the human aspect as the center of tourism development is a vision that should guide regional policymakers.

Ideally, the utilization of local wisdom at Sawarna Beach should not be viewed merely as a tourist attraction, but as a moral guide in managing the environment and social interactions. Local communities are expected to have ample space to express their philosophical values in tourism management to create a high sense of ownership. This integration will foster collective resilience capable of filtering negative external influences while strengthening the community's bargaining power against large corporations [11]. The use of modern communication media by local communities should be utilized to reinforce historical narratives and mythology, which are unique attractions of Sawarna Beach. Harmony between customary law (adat) and formal local government regulations is the key to maintaining tourism sustainability without sacrificing the future of the next generation. A study by [12] shows that destinations that respect local wisdom tend to have much higher levels of sustainability than others. Destination resilience will form naturally if the community feels that their culture is valued and serves as a main pillar in every physical development program. Thus, Sawarna Beach can serve as a model for other destinations in implementing the concept of cultural integration and active community participation comprehensively.

In reality, current field conditions show a trend that is highly contradictory to the ideal expectations of tourism development based on local wisdom. The massive expansion of tourism commercialization at Sawarna Beach has led to a shift in the cultural values long upheld by the community. [13] observes that the dominance of short-term economic interests often sidelines considerations of cultural preservation and the protection of indigenous communities' fundamental rights. Many strategic lands have changed hands to external parties, resulting in limited local access to their own natural and cultural resources. [14] identifies this phenomenon as cultural commodification, which reduces the sacred meaning of local wisdom to mere products traded freely. Consequently, the authenticity of the destination begins to fade as cultural practices are performed solely to suit market tastes without maintaining their underlying philosophical essence. Research by [15] reveals that the pressures of the tourism industry often force communities to abandon their traditional professions in pursuit of instant profits. Social vulnerability begins to emerge due to the loss of collective identity and the weakening of kinship ties that were once the primary strength of coastal communities in Banten. This phenomenon creates tension between groups supporting total commercialization and those still striving to preserve the noble values of their ancestral heritage.

The reality at Sawarna Beach also reveals that local community participation remains at a formal level and has not yet touched upon strategic substance in destination management. [16], in their study, found that citizen involvement is often limited to low-level labor or small-scale vending without a voice in policy. [17] add that critical decisions regarding spatial planning and the direction of tourism development are still dominated by a few elites and outside investors. Disparities in information access and a lack of transparent communication channels make it difficult for the community to provide meaningful contributions to cultural heritage preservation. This is exacerbated by weak coordination between customary institutions and relevant government agencies, leading to overlapping regulations that confuse local residents. The lack of capacity-building programs makes it difficult for local communities to compete in professional tourism management while maintaining their local wisdom values. [18] state that without meaningful participation, the community will feel alienated in their own homeland and tend to become apathetic. This apathy will ultimately undermine destination resilience, as there is no longer social control from

within the community against environmental and cultural degradation. Distributive injustice in tourism profit-sharing further widens the gap between the destination's physical progress and the actual welfare of the affected local community.

Other realities indicate that local wisdom in the Lebak region is increasingly threatened by the penetration of external cultures without strong filtering mechanisms. Traditional practices that once served as social glue are being abandoned by the younger generation, who are more attracted to instant urban lifestyles. [19] and [20] highlight how regional tourism policies are often insensitive to the existence of customary laws that have long governed the social order. As a result, there is a slow but steady degradation of the physical and social environment because oversight based on local wisdom is no longer effectively recognized. [21] found that the construction of villas and hotels on the coast often violates customary land boundaries considered sacred by the local community. This communication misalignment creates new vulnerabilities, making the destination fragile to fluctuating market trends without a solid foundation. [22] assert that the loss of the original cultural landscape will lead to a decline in interest from tourists seeking authentic experiences in Banten. Without appropriate intervention, local wisdom will only end up as a historical footnote in books without real implementation in tourism life. The lack of communication innovation in preserving ancestral values in the digital era makes the information gap between the older and younger generations increasingly evident.

The rapid pace of digital transformation also presents new challenges for the cultural resilience of the Sawarna Beach community, which is not yet fully prepared. Many local tourism actors are unable to utilize communication technology wisely to promote local wisdom as a unique added value for the destination. [23] warns that the failure to integrate local values into digital resilience strategies will cause destinations to lose their intrinsic appeal. On the other hand, the phenomenon of "overtourism" beginning to affect several spots in Banten indicates weak capacity management based on local environmental wisdom. [24]report that uncontrolled tourist surges have placed heavy pressure on social infrastructure. If not accompanied by the strengthening of participatory communication, this condition will trigger resistance from local residents toward tourism in their area. [25] warn that the resilience of a cultural heritage destination heavily depends on how much the community feels protected. The inability to manage tourist expectations and local community needs creates vulnerabilities that could explode into open conflict at any time in the future. The urgency to find an integration formula between old values and new demands has become increasingly pressing for all parties to resolve thoroughly.

A very clear gap exists between the expectation of tourism based on local wisdom and the reality of massive commercialization at Sawarna Beach. Theoretically, community involvement and the use of traditional knowledge should be pillars of resilience; however, in practice, there is a marginalization of indigenous roles. Previous studies have tended to view tourism only from the perspective of macro-economic impact or environmental damage without deeply analyzing its integrative communication mechanisms. There is a void in research regarding how participatory communication strategies can act as a glue between local wisdom values and resilient destination development policies. The current state of Sawarna Beach, standing at a crossroads between industrial progress and cultural extinction, demands applicable scientific solutions. The lack of a concrete integration model results in policies that are often reactive and do not address the root causes at the grassroots level. Therefore, this research is highly urgent and important to formulate a strategy for integrating local wisdom and community participation. The results of this study are expected to provide a significant contribution to building cultural heritage destination resilience capable of withstanding global transformation. Saving the authenticity of Sawarna Beach through the strengthening of social capital and cultural communication is an emergency step that must be realized immediately for the sustainability of civilization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Grand Theory: Social Construction of Reality

The Social Construction of Reality theory, proposed by [6], posits that social reality is not a natural occurrence but is actively constructed through human interaction. In this perspective, society is viewed as a human product (externalization), while simultaneously, humans are products of society (internalization). The social reality at Sawarna Beach, including customary rules and environmental perspectives, is the result of a continuous dialectical process between individuals and the surrounding social structures.

In the context of cultural heritage tourism, this theory explains how local wisdom in Sawarna undergoes objectivation, where subjective ancestral values transform into mutually recognized formal rules. Village Regulations (*Peraturan Desa*) and the "*Lembur Matuh*" norms are not merely legal texts but objective realities constructed by village officials and community leaders to safeguard regional identity. This research employs this theory to dissect how meanings of "sacredness" and "preservation" are socially formed to serve as behavioral guides for both locals and tourists.

Functionally, Social Construction serves as an overarching framework to understand that destination resilience depends heavily on how strongly the community internalizes these local values into daily life. If this process of meaning construction is solid, external cultural interventions will not easily disrupt the existing order. This theory addresses the research's philosophical foundation: that the sustainability of Sawarna Beach as a heritage destination is the result of a collective agreement by the community to interpret and defend their living space.

2.2. Middle Range Theory: Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-Based Tourism (CBT), pioneered by [1], is a tourism development model that positions the local community as the primary stakeholder and controller of development. This theory emphasizes that tourism must be managed by and for the community to ensure that economic, social, and environmental benefits remain in the hands of local residents. At Sawarna Beach, CBT serves as an essential instrument to measure the extent of community involvement, ranging from operational participation to strategic decision-making in managing tourist attractions.

The success of CBT is highly influenced by the distribution of power and access to information within the community. Referring to [2], community-based tourism is not merely about providing jobs, but about empowerment that enables residents to reject development forms inconsistent with local values. In this study, CBT is used to analyze the participation patterns of tourism managers and residents in facing the challenges of cultural commodification, where community sovereignty becomes the primary benchmark for the successful integration of local wisdom.

2.3. Middle Range Theory: Social Capital

Social Capital theory, according to [26], focuses on features of social organization such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve societal efficiency through collective action. Social capital is viewed as the "glue" that allows individuals within a community to collaborate toward common goals. At Sawarna Beach, social capital manifests in the "*Rempug Desa*" (village assembly) tradition and neighborhood solidarity, which serve as the primary assets in maintaining social stability and destination security amidst tourist crowds.

In deeper dimensions, social capital is divided into bonding (internal ties), bridging (external links) and linking (relations with authority). This research highlights how the strength of *bonding social capital* among customary leaders and residents serves as a defensive wall against the intervention of large-scale capital that often ignores local rules. As explained by [20], strong social capital in group communication at the village level minimizes horizontal conflict and strengthens the community's bargaining position against outsiders or investors.

2.4. Applied Theory: Participatory Communication

Participatory Communication, developed by [8], emphasizes the importance of horizontal dialogue and the equitable exchange of meaning among all parties involved in development. Unlike top-down communication models, this theory views the community not as passive message recipients but as equal dialogue partners. In this research, participatory communication is specifically used to dissect communication barriers between the Regional Government and customary institutions at Sawarna Beach.

Barriers to tourism policy synchronization often stem from the failure of dialogic processes. When the government focuses solely on revenue targets (*PAD*) without involving customary leaders in policy formulation, resistance or a "meaning gap" occurs. This theory provides a framework to analyze whether discussion spaces in Sawarna are inclusive or merely a formality. Participatory communication demands cultural empathy and the recognition of local knowledge as a valid information source in destination design.

2.5. Applied Theory: Cultural Resilience

The theory of Cultural Resilience by [3] explains the ability of a cultural system to absorb disturbances, reorganize, and maintain its core identity amidst drastic environmental changes. In the perspective of cultural heritage, resilience is not defined as a rigid stance rejecting modernity, but rather as the adaptive capacity to manage change without losing the "soul" or original character of the community. At Sawarna Beach, cultural resilience is a key variable in observing how local traditions persist and are adhered to, even as the influx of

international tourists brings global lifestyle influences.

In a more technical dimension, cultural resilience is closely related to the community's capacity to protect its identity symbols. Referring to [27] concept of resilience in Southeast Asian tourist destinations, the strength of a destination lies in its ability to recover from social or economic shocks through the power of communal values. This study dissects how local wisdom in Sawarna functions not just as a cultural display, but as a social defense system that allows the community to remain economically independent and morally steadfast amidst massive coastal transformation.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Paradigm

This study employs the Constructivist Paradigm. Referring to [28], this paradigm views social reality as a product of human construction through symbolic interaction. The researcher seeks to understand how the Sawarna community actively constructs their tourism reality based on inherited traditional values.

3.2. Communication Tradition

The researcher utilizes the Socio-Cultural Tradition. Based on the framework of [29], this tradition focuses on how social interactions, roles, and cultural norms are formed through communication. This is highly relevant for dissecting how local wisdom is communicated by customary leaders to managers and visitors.

3.3. Research Approach

This study adopts a Qualitative Approach, referring to the perspective of [30]. They define qualitative research as an interpretative activity that situates the researcher in the real world to make that world visible. This approach is inductive, meaning the researcher does not start by proving a hypothesis but instead seeks to capture the essence and meaning behind the observed phenomena. For Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research emphasizes processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured, which is vital for exploring the depth of cultural integration in communication.

3.4. Research Design

The research design used is a Case Study, as defined by [31]. Stake emphasizes that a case study is not merely a methodological choice but a choice of the object to be studied in depth and uniqueness (a bounded system). The researcher employs an Instrumental Case Study to understand the specific communication patterns at Sawarna Beach. Through Stake's design, the researcher conducts intensive observations of communicative cases that represent the challenges of integrating local wisdom and community participation.

3.5. Research Subject and Object

1. Research Object: Integrative communication strategies between local wisdom and community participation in building destination resilience.
2. Research Subjects (Informants) : Determined purposively to obtain authoritative data:
   a. Key Informants: The Head of Sawarna Village, Neighborhood Heads (RT/RW), and Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) managers.
   b. Informants: Community/Customary leaders, local residents, and visitors.

3.6. Data Collection Techniques

The researcher applied data collection triangulation techniques [32]:

1. Participant Observation: Direct observation of cultural communication activities and tourist interaction patterns in the Sawarna Beach area.
2. In-depth Interview: Semi-structured dialogues with key informants using an interview guide to explore motives and perceptions.
3. Documentation: Collecting data through Village Regulation (Perdes) manuscripts, village history archives, photos of customary activities, and supporting documents from the Lebak Regency Tourism Office.

3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by (Miles et al., 2014) through three simultaneous stages:

1. Data Condensation: The process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing data from interview results and field observations.
2. Data Display: Organizing data narratively and systematically to make interrelationships easy to understand.
3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Testing the validity of findings to provide valid answers to the research questions.

3.8. Data Validity Techniques (Triangulation)

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research results, the researcher utilized Triangulation techniques according to the standards of [34]):

1. Source Triangulation: Comparing data obtained from various sources. For example, verifying the Village Head's statements regarding village

policy with the perspectives of Community Leaders and the feedback from Visitors.
2. Technical Triangulation: Re-checking data obtained through different techniques. The researcher compared Interview data regarding customary compliance with direct Observation results in the field and Documentation(Village Regulations).
3. Time Triangulation: Checking the consistency of information at different times (e.g., observation during weekdays vs. national holidays) to ensure that community behavior patterns toward local wisdom remain stable.
4. Theory Triangulation: Utilizing various theoretical perspectives (Social Construction, CBT, and Social Capital) to analyze the same phenomenon to avoid researcher subjectivity bias.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. FINDINGS

1. Forms of Local Wisdom and Community Participation Patterns in Destination Management

This research reveals that local wisdom at Sawarna Beach has transformed from an oral tradition into a formally binding regulatory instrument. Based on field findings, the integration of customary values into modern governance serves as the primary foundation for community sovereignty. This was emphasized by the Head of Sawarna Village (2026) during an in-depth interview: *"Our local wisdom is not only oral; it is written into Village Regulations (Perdes). We strictly regulate that the development of homestays must be owned by local residents, not large-scale investors. This is our way of maintaining economic sovereignty so that the community is not marginalized."* This statement was validated by a Customary Leader (2026), who explained that community involvement is rooted in the philosophy of *"Lembur Matuh,"* a collective consciousness to protect the land entrusted by their ancestors.

Theoretically, these findings confirm the Social Construction Theory by [6], where the community's subjective values are internalized into a mutually recognized objective reality. This participation pattern also aligns with the principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) according to [1] and is reinforced by the research results of [2] in *Tourism Review*, which state that community sovereignty over tourism assets is the key to maintaining destination identity.

2. Barriers to Synchronizing Tourism Policies with Community Customary Values

Despite strong internal solidarity at the village level, significant communication barriers were found between local stakeholders and the regional government. The Chairman of Pokdarwis (2026) revealed differences in orientation regarding the direction of destination development: *"The main obstacle is coordination. Often, policies from the Regency focus only on retribution targets and increasing visitor numbers, but pay little attention to environmental carrying capacity and the sacred values of the land that we protect through custom."*

This barrier indicates a failure in the application of Participatory Communication as developed by [8]. The lack of horizontal dialogue causes a perception gap between the government's technocratic approach and the local community's value-based approach. This finding is consistent with [16] in *Tourism Management Perspectives*, which highlights that the dominance of top-down policies in Indonesia often triggers resistance at the local level. Therefore, strengthening Social Capital [26] through equitable dialogue spaces is an absolute solution to rebuild trust between the bureaucracy and customary institutions.

3.Integrative Strategies in Building Cultural Heritage Destination Resilience

The effectiveness of this local wisdom integration ultimately results in an authentic and independent destination resilience. This is directly felt by tourists, as expressed by a Visitor (2026): *"I always return to Sawarna because the atmosphere is still authentic. The residents are friendly, and the customary rules feel very real here. This is what gives Sawarna a different soul compared to other beaches that have become too modern."* This socio-economic resilience was also affirmed by a Neighborhood Head (RW) (2026), stating that community independence serves as a bulwark when the tourism industry experiences external shocks: *"When visits are low, we can still survive because we have social granaries and do not depend on large external capital."*

This analysis is highly relevant to the Cultural Resilience theory by [3] in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, which emphasizes that adaptive cultural heritage is a strategic asset for sustainability. Supported by the arguments of [27], resilience in Southeast Asian destinations relies heavily on the strength of communal bonds. Thus, the strategic integration of local wisdom, active community participation, and inclusive communication at Sawarna Beach has

proven effective in creating a resilient and sustainable cultural heritage tourism model.

4.2. DISCUSSION

The analysis of local wisdom integration at Sawarna Beach shows that the sustainability of cultural heritage destinations depends heavily on the success of the collectively conducted Social Construction process. Based on the research findings, the internalization of the *"Lembur Matuh"* value into Village Regulations (Perdes) proves the theory of [6] that social reality is a dialectical result intentionally created to maintain order. The success of the Sawarna community in maintaining ownership of tourism assets (such as local homestays) without external capital intervention confirms the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) principles of [1]. This aligns with the argument of [2] in *Tourism Review* that community sovereignty over economic resources is the primary foundation preventing cultural commodification that destroys destination authenticity.

However, this study also identifies a disconnect between technocratic regional government policies and organic customary values. This communication barrier validates the critique by Jan [8] in Participatory Communication Theory, where one-way (top-down) communication models tend to ignore local wisdom as a valid source of knowledge. This misalignment is consistent with the findings of [16] in *Tourism Management Perspectives*, which highlight that in Indonesia, bureaucratic sectoral egos often hinder grassroots participation. This discussion suggests that to bridge this gap, the strengthening of Social Capital [26] is required through the equitable *"Rempug Desa"*dialogue space, ensuring that tourism policies do not merely chase visitor targets but also respect the boundaries of land sacredness guarded by the indigenous community.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of communication integration found in Sawarna leads to the formation of extraordinary Cultural Resilience. The community's toughness in facing tourism industry fluctuations proves the theory of [3] that adaptive cultural heritage is a strategic asset for future sustainability. This is reinforced by the perspective of [27] in *Resilience in Asian Tourism*, stating that strong communal bonds function as "immunity" against external shocks. Thus, the model of local wisdom integration in Sawarna is not merely a romanticization of the past, but a future communication strategy capable of creating destinations that are resilient, independent, and retain an "authentic soul" amidst the swift currents of global transformation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and discussion regarding the integrative communication strategy of local wisdom and community participation at Sawarna Beach, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Construction of Local Wisdom and Autonomous Participation Patterns The integration of local wisdom at Sawarna Beach has successfully transformed from oral traditions into a formal legal structure through Village Regulations (*Perdes*). This process of Social Construction [6] creates an objective reality where the *"Lembur Matuh"* philosophy serves as a moral foundation for active community engagement. The identified participation pattern is bottom-up and autonomous, where community sovereignty over economic assets (such as local homestays and tour guides) has proven effective in maintaining destination authenticity and preventing massive external capital dominance, in alignment with Community-Based Tourism (CBT) principles.
2. Synchronization Barriers and Participatory Communication Gaps Despite strong internal integration at the village level, significant barriers were identified in the form of a Communication Gap between the local government and the indigenous community. This obstacle stems from diverging orientations: the government tends to employ a technocratic-quantitative approach (revenue targets), while the local community utilizes a value-qualitative approach (land sacredness). This indicates that Participatory Communication [8] has not been fully optimized, as top-down policies often bypass horizontal dialogue spaces (*"Rempug Desa"*), leading to a lack of synchronization in spatial tourism planning.
3. Cultural Resilience as the Result of Strategic Integration The strategy of integrating local wisdom communication has proven highly effective in building Cultural Resilience [3]. Sawarna Beach possesses high adaptability to tourism industry fluctuations due to its economic independence and robust communal ties (Social Capital). The success in maintaining its cultural "soul" or identity amidst global transformation

serves as a Unique Selling Point (USP) that ensures the long-term sustainability of the destination.

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