



## Exploring the Potential and Barriers of Tourism Villages: A Community Empowerment Perspective from West Bandung

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This study aims to explore how the concept of community-based tourism (CBT) is implemented in selected tourism villages in West Bandung Regency, with a focus on identifying local potentials and barriers in the context of community empowerment.

**Design/methods/approach** – The research adopts a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through field observation, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, literature review, and documentation analysis. Four tourism villages were selected as case studies: Cibodas, Sunten Jaya, Cihanjuang Rahayu, and Rende.

**Findings** – The study found varying levels of community participation and institutional support across the villages. Cibodas Village has successfully implemented CBT and serves as a model for others. Sunten Jaya Village has latent potential but lacks active community involvement. Cihanjuang Rahayu Village shows promising opportunities with ongoing needs for infrastructure and support. Rende Village faces challenges in tourism management and community engagement, highlighting the need for consistent assistance.

**Research implications/limitations** – This study is limited to four villages within one regency, which may not reflect the broader dynamics of community-based tourism across different regions. Future research could incorporate comparative analysis across districts or provinces.

**Originality/value** – This paper contributes to the discourse on community empowerment through tourism by offering grounded insights from under-researched rural areas. It emphasizes the importance of participatory governance, sustained facilitation, and infrastructure development in advancing community-based tourism in Indonesia.

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## Introduction

Tourism villages in Indonesia serve as a powerful tool for sustainable rural development, leveraging local resources and implementing community participation to advance economic, environmental, and cultural objectives. Numerous studies provide compelling support for the impact of tourism villages on rural development. Bozdaglar highlights the effectiveness of community-based tourism initiatives, establishing that such programs significantly enhance the well-being of local communities while promoting

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sustainable tourism development, which includes positive impacts on local economies and environmental conservation (Bozdaglar, 2023). This is complemented by Ginanjar, who discusses community empowerment in tourism development, asserting that community-based tourism fundamentally depends on active local participation, which leads to more significant benefits in poverty reduction and social upliftment (Ginanjar, 2023). Furthermore, Putra points out that village tourism serves as a strategic measure to combat economic and social issues by encouraging local entrepreneurship and resource conservation (Putra, 2019).

The success of tourism villages as a community-based initiative is largely attributed to their emphasis on local participation and the utilization of indigenous resources. Adnyani and Purnamawati discuss the necessity of integrating local customary laws and community interests into tourism management, which fosters a sense of ownership among residents and empowers them in the decision-making processes underpinning tourism development (Adnyani & Purnamawati, 2020). This participatory approach not only enhances the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources but also mitigates poverty and unemployment, as noted by Ginanjar, who suggests that empowering local communities is integral to achieving meaningful tourism development outcomes (Ginanjar, 2023). In summary, tourism villages represent a strategic alternative for fostering sustainable rural development in Indonesia through community-based tourism. They harness local potential and engage residents in participatory models of development that uplift local livelihoods while working towards environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. The robust body of evidence indicates that when local communities are directly involved in tourism planning and management, the beneficial outcomes extend beyond mere economic growth to encompass broader social, cultural, and environmental benefits, fostering a resilient rural economy (Suhel & Bashir, 2018; Revida et al., 2023; Firdaus et al., 2021).

The implementation of tourism villages in Indonesia, while promising for community empowerment and sustainable development, faces several significant challenges that inhibit the successful realization of community-based tourism (CBT) principles. Research indicates that inadequate infrastructure, low levels of local capacity, fragmented governance, and unequal benefit distribution severely impede the development of tourism villages. For example, Areros et al. emphasize that the capacity and

commitment of local policy implementers are crucial for the success of tourism villages. Without sufficient local government engagement and resources, many initiatives falter (Areros et al., 2022). Moreover, Hidayattuloh et al. assert that the development of tourism villages must be based on the potential of the village, which highlights the need for alignment between community empowerment ideals and the realities of tourism development (Hidayattuloh et al., 2020). In West Java Province, specifically in West Bandung Regency, despite the region's potential due to its stunning landscapes and cultural heritage, many villages struggle to fully engage local communities in the tourism process, leading to uneven benefits and outcomes.

The barriers to effective tourism village development can primarily be attributed to insufficient infrastructure, which is essential for attracting tourists. As noted by Fitri et al., participatory empowerment programs, which are vital for community self-reliance and successful tourism experiences, are often inadequately implemented due to these infrastructural shortcomings (Fitri et al., 2023). Furthermore, the governance structure in many areas may be fragmented, causing miscommunication and ineffective policy implementation among stakeholders (Tobirin et al., 2023). This fragmentation often results in unequal benefit distribution, where only a small fraction of the community reaps the economic rewards of tourism, exacerbating local inequalities (Yachin & Ioannides, 2020). Additionally, as observed by Yuniawati et al., these issues of uneven benefits are coupled with a lack of digital leverage that further complicates the promotion of tourism within rural settings, limiting broader community engagement and financial success (Yuniawati et al., 2023). In conclusion, while tourism villages present a viable model for sustainable rural development, multifaceted challenges impede their effective implementation in Indonesia. Addressing issues such as inadequate infrastructure, promoting local capacity, improving governance structures, and ensuring equitable benefit distribution are critical for the realization of CBT principles. Only through a concerted effort to identify and overcome these barriers can communities in regions like West Bandung Regency effectively capitalize on their potential as inclusive tourism destinations, leading to enhanced local empowerment and sustainable economic growth.

This study investigates the tourism village movement in West Bandung Regency from the perspective of community empowerment, addressing

disparities between government-led tourism initiatives and the actual involvement and welfare of rural communities. Data indicates a significant divergence between the increasing visitor numbers reported in West Java and the actual benefits accrued by local communities. Nur et al. highlight that while government involvement is critical for sustainable rural development, it often lacks a focus on genuine community needs and participation Nur et al. (2023). Similarly, Xue and Kerstetter emphasize that tourism development is frequently managed in a top-down manner, where local government priorities consistently overshadow the involvement of local residents, leading to a disconnect between community interests and tourism governance (Xue & Kerstetter, 2017). Furthermore, Sari et al. argue that effective sustainable tourism development in rural areas must align with community welfare and empowerment initiatives (Sari et al., 2023). Collectively, these studies underscore the need to assess who benefits from tourism growth and how local communities exert control over tourism governance.

The core of this disparity lies in the governance structures and approaches employed during tourism development. Government initiatives often favor top-down frameworks, marginalizing local voices and limiting community participation in decision-making processes. He et al. assert that successful tourism initiatives require empowering local populations to adapt and benefit from tourism, which is often overlooked in rigid and centralized governance structures (He et al., 2021). Such an approach creates barriers to inclusive development, leading to unequal distributions of tourism benefits and exacerbating existing inequalities within rural communities. Additionally, the limited capacity for local communities to engage effectively in tourism planning and management reinforces their disempowerment, perpetuating a cycle of dependency on external actors (Xue & Kerstetter, 2017). While the tourism village movement in West Bandung Regency offers promise for community empowerment and sustainable development, significant challenges persist due to disparities in governance and community involvement. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing tourism initiatives that genuinely reflect local communities' needs and aspirations. By prioritizing community engagement and recognizing the vital role of local governance, stakeholders can work towards a more inclusive tourism model that effectively empowers rural populations and enhances their welfare.

The paper is structured as follows: first, we offer a theoretical overview of community-based tourism and community empowerment, drawing from key literature to frame our analysis. We then describe the socio-demographic and geographic context of the selected tourism villages in West Bandung. The core sections present the findings from fieldwork—highlighting both the potentials (such as local cultural richness and environmental assets) and the barriers (such as limited institutional support, lack of skills, and policy inconsistencies). In doing so, we engage with competing views in the literature on CBT, including the tension between top-down and bottom-up development strategies, and the debate over tourism’s ability to deliver equitable benefits. By situating the study within these broader discussions, this paper contributes to the ongoing academic and policy dialogue on sustainable rural tourism in Indonesia and beyond. The main aim of this research is to identify how tourism villages in West Bandung function as platforms for community empowerment and what barriers must be addressed to enhance their impact. Ultimately, our findings suggest that while tourism villages hold considerable potential for local development, realizing this potential depends on sustained participatory governance, equitable benefit-sharing, and context-sensitive policy support.

## Methods

This study employed a **qualitative research design** using a **case study approach** to explore the dynamics of community-based tourism in selected tourism villages in West Bandung Regency. The case study method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, including how communities perceive, experience, and manage tourism development within their local context.

### *Research Design*

The research utilized a **descriptive qualitative approach** focusing on multiple tourism villages as cases. Each case was explored to examine both the potential and barriers of tourism development from a community empowerment perspective. The study emphasized naturalistic inquiry, aiming to understand real-life conditions through interactions with local communities, government representatives, and tourism actors.

### *Population and Sample*

The **target population** for this study consisted of key stakeholders involved in the management and development of tourism villages in West Bandung Regency. These include village heads, tourism village managers, homestay operators, community leaders, and government officials from the West Bandung Tourism Office.

Sampling was conducted using **purposive sampling** techniques, with the main criterion being informants who had in-depth knowledge and involvement in tourism development in their respective villages. The study focused on **four tourism villages** with different tourism characteristics and stages of development:

1. Cibodas Tourism Village
2. Sunten Jaya Tourism Village
3. Cihanjuang Rahayu Tourism Village
4. Rende Tourism Village

A total of **13 key informants** were selected, including:

1. Village officials (heads, secretaries)
2. Tourism managers
3. Community members
4. Local business owners

### *Data Collection Techniques and Instrument Development*

The research employed **four data collection techniques**:

1. **In-depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants using a prepared interview guide covering aspects such as tourism potential, community participation, empowerment strategies, and challenges.
2. **Observation:** The researcher conducted direct observations in each village to identify tourist attractions, community activities, and infrastructure conditions. Field notes were compiled to document relevant findings.

3. **Document Analysis:** Official documents such as village profiles, tourism development plans, and government regulations were collected and reviewed to provide contextual understanding.
4. **Literature Review:** Supporting literature on community-based tourism, empowerment, and rural development was incorporated to build the theoretical foundation and compare findings.

All interviews were recorded (with consent), transcribed, and coded manually to facilitate thematic analysis. The researcher acted as the **main instrument**, applying reflexivity and contextual sensitivity throughout the data collection process.

### *Researcher Presence and Role*

The **researcher was actively involved** in every stage of the research, including establishing rapport with informants, conducting interviews and observations, and interpreting the data. The researcher's presence in the field enabled a better understanding of the socio-cultural nuances and community dynamics in each location.

### *Location and Duration*

The research was conducted in **West Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia**, across four villages with tourism village status or designation. Fieldwork was carried out over a period of **three months**, from **January to March 2023**.

### *Data Validity and Trustworthiness*

To ensure the **validity and reliability** of the data, the study employed **triangulation** by cross-verifying data from different sources (interviews, observations, documents). Additionally, the study applied the following credibility criteria based on:

1. **Credibility:** Ensured through prolonged engagement and member checking.
2. **Transferability:** Provided by detailed descriptions of the research context.
3. **Dependability:** Ensured through clear documentation of the research process.

4. **Confirmability:** Achieved by maintaining an audit trail of data and analytical decisions.

### *Data Analysis Techniques*

Data were analyzed using a **thematic analysis** approach. The analysis process involved:

1. Organizing and coding interview transcripts and field notes.
2. Identifying emerging patterns and categories related to tourism potential, barriers, and community empowerment.
3. Interpreting the data in relation to the theoretical framework of community-based tourism.
4. Presenting findings using descriptive narratives, supported by direct quotations and field observations.

The analysis focused on synthesizing both empirical insights and theoretical perspectives to draw meaningful conclusions about the dynamics of tourism village development in West Bandung

## **Result**

This section presents the key findings of the fieldwork conducted in four selected tourism villages in West Bandung Regency. The results are organized into subtopics concerning tourism potential, barriers to development, and levels of community empowerment.

### *Tourism Potentials across the Villages*

Each of the four selected villages—Cibodas, Sunten Jaya, Cihanjuang Rahayu, and Rende—has distinct tourism potential. These include natural, cultural, and spiritual attractions.

### *Natural and Cultural Attractions*

Cibodas Village has successfully developed nature-based tourism with established destinations like The Lodge Maribaya and Bougenville. These attractions are professionally managed and contribute significantly to local economic activity.

Sunten Jaya Village boasts natural sites such as Curug Lalay, Pasir Angling, and cultural experiences like traditional coffee production and the mythic Batu

Lonceng (Stone Bell). However, they remain underutilized due to limited infrastructure and promotion.

Cihanjuang Rahayu Village features attractions like Ciwangun Indah Camp and Singapore Valley. While Ciwangun is well-managed, other attractions lack accessibility and basic facilities.

Rende Village's tourism relies on religious visits to ancestral graves, notably the Tomb of Eyang Rende. Despite its recognition by a regent's decree as a tourism village, development is minimal.

### *Community-Based Tourism Readiness*

The readiness for community-based tourism (CBT) is highest in Cibodas Village, where the local Pokdarwis is active, and homestay management is well-organized. Villages like Sunten Jaya and Cihanjuang Rahayu have emerging potential but need structured community involvement. Rende Village, meanwhile, lacks both community mobilization and tourism infrastructure.

**Table 1. Overview of Tourism Potential and Management Status**

Village	Key Attractions	Management Status	Community Involvement
Cibodas	Nature tourism, homestays	Professional	High (active Pokdarwis)
Sunten Jaya	Waterfalls, plantations, cultural tours	Limited/unstructured	Medium (informal efforts)
Cihanjuang Rahayu	Singapore Valley, waterfalls	Partial (Ciwangun only)	Low (minimal initiative)
Rende	Religious sites	Minimal	None (no follow-up program)

### *Barriers to Tourism Development*

Several obstacles hinder the growth of tourism across the villages, ranging from logistical issues to institutional gaps.

### *Accessibility and Infrastructure*

Sunten Jaya and Cihanjuang Rahayu both suffer from poor road access and lack of basic facilities such as signage, rest areas, and public toilets. These deficits reduce the appeal and safety for tourists.

Rende Village faces the most severe infrastructural constraints. Despite official designation, there is no sustained effort from local or regional government to improve infrastructure.

#### **Figure 1. Road and Infrastructure Condition in Tourism Villages**

**(a) Unpaved access road to Singapore Valley; (b) Abandoned tourist huts in Rende Village)**

#### **1.2.2. Institutional and Financial Limitations**

Villages like Sunten Jaya and Rende lack institutional continuity. While training (BIMTEK) and planning documents exist, they were never followed up with concrete programs or funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Cibodas, where homestays and attractions were forced to close, causing economic setbacks for local operators.

### *Community Empowerment and Participation*

Community involvement is the backbone of CBT. However, levels of participation vary significantly.

#### *Best Practice: Cibodas Village*

Cibodas demonstrates successful empowerment. Locals are engaged as homestay operators, guides, and staff at tourist attractions. A homestay in the village even received a national award.

#### *Challenges in Other Villages*

In Sunten Jaya, a small number of residents are involved in coffee tourism and souvenir production. The majority remain focused on agriculture.

Cihanjuang Rahayu residents are mainly employed in vegetable farming, with little awareness or incentive to engage in tourism.

Rende shows the lowest community participation. Though Pokdarwis was established, it is inactive. Many locals expressed willingness to be involved, but lack of support hinders action.

### *Summary of Key Challenges*

The study identifies the following core challenges faced by tourism villages in West Bandung:

- (1) Inadequate infrastructure and access roads
- (2) Lack of follow-up support from government and tourism agencies
- (3) Minimal community awareness and involvement in tourism initiatives
- (4) Weak institutional structures for tourism management
- (5) Economic setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal significant variations in the potential and barriers faced by tourism villages in West Bandung, highlighting the critical role of community empowerment in the success of tourism development initiatives. These results align with the conceptual framework of *Community-Based Tourism* (CBT), which emphasizes local ownership, participation, and benefit-sharing (Asker et al., 2010; Scheyvens, 1999).

#### *Reaffirming the Role of Community-Based Tourism*

Cibodas Village exemplifies the successful integration of community participation and supportive institutional structures in promoting effective tourism practices, demonstrating the potential of grassroots empowerment in community-based tourism (CBT). Research shows that Cibodas Village has achieved notable success through the active involvement of local communities and the establishment of structures like Pokdarwis (Kelompok Sadar Wisata), which facilitate tourism governance and development. For instance, a study by Susilawati and Surya (2022) highlights that the presence of trained local operators and professionally managed homestays plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of tourism services provided. Additionally, the collaboration between community members and private stakeholders has led to a diversified tourism offering that attracts visitors, corroborating earlier findings by Frochot and Humblot, who argue that multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential for sustainable tourism development

The success of Cibodas Village can be attributed to the dual aspects of community motivation and institutional support. The Pokdarwis framework enhances local capacity by providing training and resources that empower residents to actively engage in tourism development. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership among villagers, who are more likely to invest in maintaining and improving their tourism offerings. Additionally, effective partnerships with private stakeholders enable the village to leverage external expertise and investment, ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are more equitably distributed within the community. As highlighted in research by Buckley (2009), sustainable tourism development relies heavily on active stakeholder involvement and collaboration. Cibodas Village demonstrates how active community participation, supported by institutional frameworks like Pokdarwis, can lead to successful tourism practices that yield sustainable economic benefits. The village's ability to transform its natural assets into viable tourism opportunities reinforces the notion that community-based tourism flourishes when local communities are both motivated and well-supported through effective institutional mechanisms. This case underscores the importance of grassroots empowerment and multi-stakeholder collaboration in achieving long-term sustainable development outcomes in tourism.

In contrast, villages like Sunten Jaya and Cihanjuang Rahayu, despite having abundant natural and cultural resources, struggle to realize tourism benefits due to insufficient infrastructure, weak institutional commitment, and low levels of tourism literacy. This finding supports studies by Goodwin & Santilli (2009), which caution that without deliberate planning and long-term support, tourism development risks being fragmented or ineffective, even in areas with high potential.

### *The Gap Between Designation and Implementation*

The case of Rende Village effectively illustrates the disconnect between top-down tourism policy designation and grassroots implementation, highlighting the inadequacies of government-led initiatives in fostering genuine community-based tourism (CBT). Despite Rende Village being officially designated as a tourism village, it has not received adequate follow-up support in critical areas such as funding, training, or infrastructure development. Research by Damanik and Puspitasari (2021) indicates that many villages recognized by government schemes often experience a gap between recognition and real support, resulting in limited local capacity to

implement tourism initiatives effectively (Bozdaglar, 2023). Furthermore, a study by Okazaki (2008) emphasizes that successful tourism village programs are contingent upon ongoing policy execution and community empowerment, both of which Rende has lacked. The absence of engagement and resources has hindered residents from contributing actively to the tourism sector. This disconnect can be attributed to the common pitfalls of top-down policy approaches in tourism development, where government initiatives often prioritize designation over practical support. The failure to integrate community involvement during the planning and implementation stages restricts local ownership and enthusiasm for tourism development (Ginanjar, 2023). As observed by Jamal and Stronza (2009), community engagement is vital for the successful realization of CBT principles as it fosters a deeper connection to cultural heritage and environmental sustainability, allowing for economic diversification (Putra, 2019). Rende's situation exemplifies how neglecting these foundational elements can lead to missed opportunities for the effective institutionalization of CBT, which could contribute significantly to local economic growth and cultural preservation. In summary, Rende Village's experience underscores the critical shortcomings of top-down tourism policy designation, revealing the necessity for adequate support mechanisms and community involvement in the implementation of tourism initiatives. The lack of follow-up in funding, training, and infrastructure development demonstrates that without consistent policy execution and local capacity-building, official recognition alone is insufficient for establishing effective community-based tourism. This case emphasizes the need for a more integrated approach that prioritizes grassroots participation and sustainable development principles to realize the full potential of tourism in rural communities.

### External Shocks and Their Lasting Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Cibodas Village, severely disrupting tourism activities such as homestays and local attractions, thus underscoring the need for more resilient tourism models. In Cibodas Village, tourism activities came to a complete halt during the pandemic, which aligns with the findings of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021), which reported that rural tourism globally suffered significant downturns due to pandemic-related restrictions, particularly in areas heavily reliant on physical visitation for economic stability (Adnyani & Purnamawati, 2020). Moreover, a study by Gursoy and Chi (2020) indicated

that communities with a strong dependence on tourism are particularly vulnerable to sudden disruptions, resulting in both economic and social repercussions (Suhel & Bashir, 2018). The experience in Cibodas illustrates these broader trends, revealing a stark decline in livelihoods linked to tourism.

The disruption in Cibodas and the broader rural tourism sector can largely be attributed to a lack of preparedness for crises like the pandemic, highlighting an inherent vulnerability in traditional tourism models that rely solely on face-to-face interactions and physical presence. As noted by Alharbi et al. (2022), diverse income streams and an agile response to changing circumstances are essential for tourism sectors to absorb shocks, and the reliance on a singular mode of tourism only magnifies these vulnerabilities (Revida et al., 2023). The pandemic has demonstrated that communities must adopt innovative practices such as digital marketing, remote engagement strategies, and diversified revenue sources to sustain and preserve their tourism economy, as emphasized by many tourism scholars advocating for resilience in tourism planning (Firdaus et al., 2021). In conclusion, the experience of Cibodas Village during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the urgent need for more resilient tourism models that can withstand unforeseen disruptions. The significant impact on tourism activities and local livelihoods underscores the importance of moving towards diversified income streams, enhancing digital promotion, and establishing emergency support systems for tourism operators. Without such adaptations, rural communities like Cibodas risk further economic instability in the wake of future crises, thereby underscoring the necessity for strategic changes in tourism development practices moving forward.

#### Infrastructure and Accessibility as Core Constraints

The study emphasizes the critical role of infrastructure in facilitating or hindering tourism development in rural areas, with specific reference to Cihanjuang Rahayu and Sunten Jaya, where inadequate infrastructure significantly limits tourist access and experience. Observations from the study highlight how poor road conditions, insufficient signage, and a lack of essential facilities directly impact the ability of tourists to reach and enjoy these destinations. This situation echoes the findings of Scheyvens and Russell (2012), who assert that accessibility is an essential prerequisite for successful rural tourism, indicating that without proper infrastructure, rural destinations cannot adequately attract or accommodate visitors (Areros et

al., 2022). The implications of these deficiencies in Cihanjuang Rahayu and Sunten Jaya are significant; even areas that boast breathtaking natural landscapes or rich cultural heritage struggle to draw sustainable tourist traffic due to logistical challenges.

The limitations posed by inadequate infrastructure can be attributed to a broader systemic issue affecting rural tourism development. As identified by Flognfeldt (2019), the success of tourism in rural areas relies heavily on creating an environment that is welcoming and accessible to visitors, which necessitates investment in transportation, signage, and basic amenities such as restrooms and information centers (Hidayattuloh et al., 2020). In the absence of these critical infrastructure components, tourists are likely to have a negative experience, which can discourage repeat visitation and word-of-mouth promotion. This highlights the importance of prioritizing infrastructure investment to enable effective tourism development and promote a positive visitor experience. The study underscores the essential nature of infrastructure in shaping tourism outcomes in rural areas like Cihanjuang Rahayu and Sunten Jaya. The observed deficiencies in roads and facilities limit both access and the overall tourist experience, reinforcing the assertion made by Scheyvens and Russell (2012) that accessibility is a fundamental requirement for successful rural tourism. To attract sustainable tourist flows and enhance the competitiveness of these destinations, it is critical for stakeholders to address infrastructure shortcomings and invest in the necessary amenities that facilitate positive tourist experiences.

### Implications and Future Directions

This research points to the need for integrated tourism development strategies that include:

- **Capacity building:** Government and NGOs must invest in training local residents on tourism management, digital literacy, and service standards.
- **Institutional continuity:** Formal structures like *Pokdarwis* must be empowered with legal status, funding mechanisms, and monitoring systems.
- **Infrastructure support:** Prioritizing road improvements and tourism facilities in villages with clear potential is critical.

- **Policy alignment:** Tourism development policies should ensure follow-through from designation to implementation, with accountability measures.

Future research should explore the role of digital technology in boosting rural tourism post-pandemic, examine gendered impacts of tourism in rural areas, and evaluate long-term community outcomes in tourism villages across Indonesia.

## Conclusion

This study has explored the potentials and barriers of tourism villages in West Bandung from a community empowerment perspective, revealing a diverse spectrum of development outcomes across the four case study villages. The findings confirm that while natural and cultural resources are important, the success of tourism village initiatives is largely determined by the degree of community participation, institutional support, infrastructure availability, and consistent policy implementation.

Cibodas Village stands out as a successful model of community-based tourism (CBT), where active community engagement, well-managed attractions, and institutional support contribute to sustainable tourism outcomes. In contrast, Sunten Jaya and Cihanjuang Rahayu Villages, despite having rich tourism assets, face challenges due to limited infrastructure, minimal community involvement, and lack of coordinated planning. Rende Village, although formally designated as a tourism village, reflects a case of stalled development due to poor follow-up, insufficient resources, and lack of local empowerment.

The main argument put forth is that **tourism villages cannot thrive on potential alone; they require sustained empowerment, infrastructure investment, and participatory governance mechanisms.** Without these elements, the transformation of villages into viable tourism destinations remains incomplete.

**Key recommendations** include:

- Enhancing community capacity through targeted training and organizational support.
- Establishing and funding local tourism institutions like *Pokdarwis*.

- Improving infrastructure and accessibility to support tourism growth.
- Aligning regional tourism policies with on-the-ground realities and ensuring implementation continuity.

**In practice**, the findings of this study can be used by local governments, development agencies, and NGOs to design more effective tourism development programs that prioritize bottom-up participation and ensure equitable benefits for rural communities.

**Future research** should investigate the long-term social and economic impacts of CBT on village livelihoods, explore the use of digital platforms for rural tourism marketing, and assess how policy reforms can address structural weaknesses in tourism governance at the local level.

Ultimately, empowering communities to own and manage tourism not only enhances the sustainability of rural development but also ensures that the cultural and ecological integrity of tourism destinations is preserved for future generations.

## Declarations

### Author contribution statement

All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, design, data collection in West Bandung tourism villages, thematic analysis, manuscript drafting, and critical revisions. Each author has read and approved the final version for publication.

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### Data availability statement

The qualitative data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. However, due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of interview materials, the data are not publicly archived in accordance with ethical agreements made with participants.

### Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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