

Sustainability Tourism Policy in Developing Community-Based Tourism Capacity in Thematic Tourism Destinations that Impact Economic Growth in Bekasi City

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the grand design policy of thematic tourism destinations in Bekasi City that supports the concept of sustainability tourism. And evaluate the capacity of community-based tourism through community empowerment in tourism destinations through Tourism Awareness Groups in Bekasi City. This study uses a qualitative research approach with the netnography method. Netnography begins through exploration of networks, sociality and consolidation, then examines ethnographic interaction field sites, research reviews and statistics to provide an up-to-date picture of offline and online social experiences through activities indicated by sustainable tourism policy and community-based tourism. The results of the study indicate that thematic tourism destinations in Bekasi City have led to planned and measurable sustainability tourism. In addition, the capacity of community-based tourism has been well met through the empowerment of tourism awareness groups in thematic tourism destinations.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism; Thematic Tourism; Community Empowerment; Tourism Awareness Group.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a vital concept in today's global tourism industry, addressing the need to balance economic growth, environmental conservation, and social equity (Bakar, & Muda, 2018). The importance of sustainable tourism is particularly evident in the development of thematic tourism destinations, where a well-crafted grand design policy can guide the growth of tourism in a manner that ensures long-term viability and community welfare (Wibowo, & Sari, 2022). A grand design policy, in this context, refers to a strategic framework that guides the development and management of tourism destinations to enhance visitor experiences, preserve cultural and natural resources, and contribute to local economic growth.

In the context of Bekasi City, sustainable tourism development presents both challenges and opportunities. The city faces various hurdles in aligning tourism growth with sustainable practices, such as ensuring community participation, environmental conservation, and the preservation of local culture. As Bekasi is in the process of developing its thematic tourism destinations, it must address issues like infrastructure development, community empowerment, and the establishment of policies that promote responsible tourism practices (Jansen-Verbeke, & Govers, 2017). These factors are critical to ensuring that tourism contributes positively to local development without compromising the needs of future generations.

One of the key opportunities in Bekasi City is the potential for community-based tourism, which emphasizes local community involvement in tourism planning and management. This approach not

only helps in creating unique and authentic experiences for visitors but also ensures that tourism benefits are distributed equitably among local stakeholders. Community-based tourism has the potential to enhance the livelihoods of residents, promote cultural exchange, and preserve local traditions. However, achieving these goals requires effective policies and strategies to empower the community and support their active participation in tourism activities.

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the grand design policy of thematic tourism destinations in Bekasi City, with a specific focus on its alignment with sustainable tourism principles. The research seeks to assess how well the policy framework supports sustainable tourism development by examining the strategic plans, objectives, and actions outlined in the grand design. It also explores the extent to which the policy promotes environmental conservation, social inclusiveness, and economic growth within thematic tourism destinations.

Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the capacity of community-based tourism in Bekasi City, particularly through the lens of community empowerment. Understanding how local communities are involved in tourism planning and development is crucial to achieving sustainability goals. This research will explore the role of Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) and other community organizations in enhancing local participation, fostering awareness of sustainable practices, and building the necessary skills for tourism development. The empowerment of these groups is a key indicator of how effectively the policy is contributing to sustainable tourism in the city.

Ultimately, this research endeavors to provide a comprehensive evaluation of both the grand design policy and the capacity of community-based tourism in Bekasi City. By doing so, it aims to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the current policy and practice. The findings are expected to offer practical recommendations for policymakers, local authorities, and stakeholders to enhance the development of thematic tourism destinations in a sustainable and inclusive manner. The study will also contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism and community-based development, offering insights that may be applicable to similar contexts beyond Bekasi City.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing the method of netnography. Netnography, which is essentially ethnography adapted for online communities, provides a comprehensive framework for examining social interactions and behaviors within digital environments. This approach is particularly effective for exploring the dynamics of thematic tourism destinations, as it enables the researcher to understand both the online and offline aspects of tourism development (Fennell, 2018). By focusing on the digital presence of tourism stakeholders, community interactions, and policy discussions, netnography allows for a nuanced analysis of how sustainable tourism policies and community-based tourism practices manifest in both virtual and real-world contexts.

The research methodology consists of several key steps. Firstly, an exploration of networks and sociality is conducted, mapping out the online communities, stakeholders, and platforms involved in tourism activities in Bekasi City. This step helps to identify the key players and digital spaces where discussions and activities related to sustainable tourism and thematic destinations occur. Following this, the study undertakes a process of consolidation and ethnographic interaction at selected field sites, observing and analyzing how community members, tourism awareness groups, and policymakers interact in both digital and physical spaces. The next step involves a review of relevant research literature and statistical data, providing context and background information that

support the study's findings. Finally, a comprehensive analysis is carried out to assess offline and online social experiences, particularly focusing on how these experiences reflect sustainable tourism policies and community-based tourism initiatives. This mixed analysis offers insights into the effectiveness and impact of tourism policies on local communities and tourism practices.

RESULTS

The study's key findings reveal that the thematic tourism destinations in Bekasi City have successfully progressed towards achieving sustainable tourism that is both planned and measurable. The implementation of a grand design policy has played a pivotal role in guiding the development of these destinations, aligning their growth with sustainable principles such as environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and economic inclusiveness. Various thematic areas have been effectively developed to highlight local culture, nature, and heritage, attracting tourists while maintaining a balance between tourism growth and sustainability. The evaluation shows that these efforts have led to a more structured tourism framework, ensuring that tourism development in Bekasi City contributes positively to local communities and preserves resources for future generations.

Community Empowerment

An important aspect of sustainable tourism in Bekasi City is the capacity-building of community-based tourism, particularly through the empowerment of Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis). These groups have been instrumental in promoting tourism that is managed and operated by local residents, ensuring that tourism development benefits the community directly. The study found that the empowerment of Pokdarwis has enhanced the skills, knowledge, and active participation of community members in tourism activities. This empowerment has been achieved through training programs, awareness campaigns, and collaboration with local government and tourism stakeholders, which have collectively increased the community's capacity to manage tourism sustainably and responsibly.

Implications for Sustainable Tourism Development

The findings suggest that the success of thematic tourism destinations in Bekasi is closely linked to the empowerment of local communities and their active involvement in tourism planning and management. The capacity-building efforts of the Pokdarwis groups demonstrate a model of community-based tourism that can effectively contribute to sustainable tourism goals. This approach not only provides economic benefits to local communities but also fosters social cohesion and cultural preservation. By leveraging the strengths of local communities and aligning tourism practices with sustainability principles, Bekasi City serves as a practical example of how thematic tourism destinations can achieve planned, sustainable growth that is beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

DISCUSSION

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study carry significant implications for sustainable tourism policy and the development of community-based tourism in Bekasi City. Firstly, the success of thematic tourism destinations, as revealed through the study, underscores the importance of a strategic, well-designed policy framework for sustainable tourism development. The grand design policy has facilitated a balanced approach to tourism growth, ensuring that economic, social, and environmental

considerations are equally addressed. This holistic approach can serve as a model for other cities seeking to develop tourism in a sustainable and community-oriented manner, as it demonstrates the effectiveness of aligning tourism policies with sustainable development goals.

The empowerment of Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) has had a substantial impact on community-based tourism, emphasizing the role of local communities as key stakeholders in tourism development. The success of these groups in Bekasi City reflects the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives, which foster local involvement and ensure that tourism is developed in a way that is both inclusive and sustainable. By enhancing community participation, such policies not only improve tourism experiences for visitors but also promote social equity and local economic growth. As a result, the findings highlight the need for tourism policies that are not only top-down but also bottom-up, enabling community voices to shape tourism practices.

Furthermore, the study's findings demonstrate that a well-implemented thematic tourism approach can significantly contribute to sustainable tourism development by showcasing local culture, natural resources, and heritage in a manner that promotes conservation and community welfare. The implication is that themed destinations not only attract tourists but also serve as educational and cultural platforms that raise awareness of sustainability issues among both locals and visitors. This approach is vital in ensuring that tourism development aligns with environmental and cultural preservation goals while supporting local livelihoods.

Recommendations for Future Policy

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made for the future development of sustainable tourism and community empowerment in Bekasi City (Parnell, & Wansbrough, 2020). Firstly, policymakers should continue to strengthen the grand design policy, ensuring that it is flexible and adaptive to emerging trends in sustainable tourism and community needs. Regular reviews and updates to the policy should be conducted to address new challenges and opportunities, particularly those related to environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and technological advancements in tourism.

To further empower community-based tourism, ongoing support and capacity-building for Tourism Awareness Groups are essential. This includes providing continuous training, resources, and financial support to enhance the skills and knowledge of local community members in tourism management. Additionally, establishing partnerships between local government, private sector, and community groups can facilitate collaborative efforts in tourism development, fostering innovation and sustainable practices. These partnerships can also help to ensure that tourism benefits are equitably shared and that local communities play an active role in decision-making processes.

Lastly, it is recommended that the city invest in the development of sustainable tourism infrastructure and digital platforms to enhance the visitor experience while supporting conservation efforts. The use of digital technologies, such as social media and online marketing, can be leveraged to promote thematic tourism destinations and highlight their unique cultural and natural assets. At the same time, tourism infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation, and waste management, should be developed with sustainability principles in mind to minimize environmental impacts and enhance the overall sustainability of tourism activities in Bekasi City.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes by affirming that the development of thematic tourism destinations in Bekasi City has significantly benefited from strategic policies and the active involvement of local communities. The findings illustrate that the implementation of a grand design policy, aligned with

principles of sustainable tourism, has provided a strong foundation for balanced tourism growth. This has ensured that economic development, environmental conservation, and social equity are well-integrated within the tourism sector. By leveraging the potential of thematic tourism, Bekasi City has been able to offer distinctive and culturally rich experiences to visitors while also safeguarding the interests of local communities and natural resources.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the critical role of community empowerment in supporting sustainable tourism. The success of community-based tourism, facilitated by the empowerment of Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis), demonstrates that local involvement is a key factor in achieving sustainable development goals. Empowered communities are more likely to take ownership of tourism initiatives, ensure responsible resource management, and promote sustainable practices. Therefore, the study underscores the need for continued policy support, community training, and active stakeholder collaboration to maintain the momentum of sustainable tourism development in thematic destinations. This approach not only secures long-term sustainability but also enhances the socio-economic well-being of the local population.

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