



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Community Empowerment and Environmental Conservation through Sustainable Tourism in Kanigara, Wonosobo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the use of the People-Environmental tourist Model in Kanigara, Indonesia, to tackle the increasing need for sustainable tourist practices in rural regions. The research seeks to assess the efficacy of this community-driven method in achieving a harmonious equilibrium between economic development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, interviews, and document analysis. It involved a total of 30 participants from three communities in the Kanigara region. The results indicate a significant level of community support for the approach, as 23 out of 30 respondents expressed their approval for its adoption. The main discoveries consist of the successful incorporation of agrotourism as a viable economic approach, the demonstration of effective collaboration between the community and the government through the Kanigara Area Decree, and a strong dedication to environmental conservation. The study highlights the difficulties in keeping stakeholders involved and finding a balance between formalization and community autonomy. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on sustainable tourism by presenting actual data that supports the effectiveness of a community-led approach in a rural area in Indonesia. This publication provides essential information for policymakers and practitioners about the implementation of inclusive and ecologically responsible tourist development methods in rural areas. It highlights the significance of local agency, adaptive governance, and holistic sustainability approaches.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector worldwide has grown at an unprecedented rate in the last few years, and travelers looking for genuine experiences and unspoiled landscapes are increasingly choosing to visit rural areas (Brouder, 2012; Heleno et al, 2021; Lane & Kastenholz, 2018). Nevertheless, the increase in tourism has frequently resulted in substantial environmental deterioration and socio-economic inequalities in the communities that host tourists (Sing et al, 2003; Thullah & Jalloh, 2021; UNWTO, 2019). The Kanigara region in Wonosobo Regency, located in Central Java, Indonesia, serves as a prime example of this intricate reality. Although the area possesses abundant natural resources and a significant cultural legacy, the local community confronts economic difficulties while also dealing with the environmental impacts of growing tourism. The existence of this paradox highlights the immediate requirement for sustainable tourism models that can effectively reconcile economic progress with environmental preservation and the welfare of local communities (Kuhn, 2007; Pane, 2024). Implementing such models is essential, as it not only helps maintain the biological integrity of

destinations like Kanigara but also ensures the long-term sustainability of tourism as an economic catalyst in rural communities. As the world becomes more aware of sustainable development, destinations that effectively incorporate community empowerment and environmental protection into their tourist plans are likely to have a competitive advantage in the global market (Khalid et al, 2019; Wardana et al, 2019; Buckley, 2012).

The idea of sustainable tourism has undergone considerable changes since its beginning, with an increasing amount of literature highlighting the significance of community engagement and environmental responsibility in the growth of tourism (Dogra et al., 2022; Saarinen, 2006). Recent research has emphasized the efficacy of community-based methods in attaining sustainable tourism results, especially in rural and environmentally vulnerable regions (Blackstock, 2005; Hariyadi et al., 2024; Ngo & Creutz, 2022; Tosun, 2006). Liu et al. (2014) conducted study that showed how involving the community in tourist planning and management might result in better environmental conservation measures and a fairer allocation of economic rewards. In a similar vein, Scheyvens (1999) put out a framework to evaluate the capacity of tourism to empower, highlighting the importance of fostering economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment among local communities. Nevertheless, despite these theoretical progressions, there is still a lack of comprehension regarding the efficient implementation of these concepts in various cultural and ecological settings, especially in developing nations such as Indonesia (Koch et al., 2013; Sofield, 2003). The People-Environmental Tourism Model, suggested by Baloch et al., (2023), presents a viable solution to address this disparity by incorporating indigenous knowledge with worldwide sustainability principles. This model extends existing frameworks by specifically addressing the unique challenges and opportunities found in regions such as Kanigara, where it is crucial to strike a delicate balance between traditional ecological knowledge and contemporary conservation strategies.

This study aims to investigate the application and results of the People-Environmental Tourism Model in the Wonosobo Regency, Indonesia, specifically in the Kanigara region. Through the examination of this case study, our objective is to enhance the overall comprehension of sustainable tourism growth in rural regions, specifically in developing nations. This research aims to: (1) determine the primary factors that affect the successful implementation of community-based sustainable tourism initiatives; (2) evaluate the effects of these initiatives on local environmental conservation efforts and community empowerment; (3) assess the difficulties and advantages in achieving a balance between economic development and ecological preservation; and (4) provide recommendations for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and local communities to improve the efficiency of sustainable tourism strategies. With this thorough examination, our goal is to connect the theoretical foundations of sustainable tourism with their actual implementation in intricate socio-ecological systems. This study will examine the Kanigara region to get significant insights into the dynamics of rural tourism growth. The findings of this study can be applied to similar contexts around the world, providing useful lessons.

This study demonstrates that the People-Environmental Tourism Model has, in fact, significantly improved community empowerment and environmental conservation outcomes in Kanigara. The research results confirm our original premise that actively engaging local populations in the process of tourism planning, management, and benefit distribution promotes a feeling of ownership and accountability towards natural resources, thereby improving conservation efforts. The evidence for this is demonstrated by the robust community backing for the concept, as 23 out of 30 respondents have expressed their support for its implementation, along with the community's proactive dedication to environmental conservation. Moreover, our assertion that this method results in fairer economic advantages and enhanced ability for long-term growth in the community is supported by the effective incorporation of agrotourism as a crucial economic tactic, which effectively balances economic progress with the preservation of the environment and culture. Nevertheless, as expected, the execution of this model has encountered obstacles, such as the requirement for continuous involvement of relevant parties, as demonstrated by the 9 individuals who expressed disagreement with the implementation of the model, and the intricacies of balancing harmonious relationships with government entities while safeguarding community independence. This study has employed a mixed-methods approach, which includes quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and analysis of policy documents, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between

tourism development, community dynamics, and environmental sustainability in the Kanigara region. The findings not only enhance the scholarly discussion on sustainable tourism but also provide practical assistance for policymakers and practitioners. The text emphasizes the significance of grassroots methods, the potential of agrotourism in promoting rural development, and the necessity of flexible management tactics for adopting community-based sustainable tourism models in other rural areas that share similar difficulties and opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable tourism is now recognized as a crucial idea in the worldwide endeavor to achieve a harmonious balance between economic progress, environmental preservation, and social fairness (Hardy et al., 2002; Harris et al., 2002). Sustainable tourism, as defined by the World Tourism Organization, refers to tourism that considers and manages its present and future economic, social, and environmental effects (Buckley, 2012; Khan et al., 2020). It aims to meet the demands of tourists, the industry, the environment, and the communities hosting the tourists (Butler, 1991; Mckercher, 1993; Thullah & Jalloh, 2021). This comprehensive approach acknowledges the interdependence of economic, social, and environmental elements in the growth of tourism (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2019; Vuković et al., 2019). Several studies have investigated the application of sustainable tourism concepts in different situations, with an increasing focus on community-based strategies (Aquino, 2018; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Saarinen, 2006). Tosun (2006) investigated the difficulties associated with community involvement in the advancement of tourism in developing nations, emphasizing the necessity for measures tailored to the individual circumstances. The development of sustainable tourism research demonstrates a transition from mostly theoretical frameworks to more pragmatic, action-focused approaches that take into account the intricacies of real-world application.

The recognition of community empowerment as a vital element of sustainable tourist development is growing (Cole, 2006; Khalid et al., 2019). In 1999, Scheyvens presented a paradigm to evaluate the potential of tourism to empower individuals. This framework focuses on four dimensions: economic, psychological, social, and political (Boley et al., 2014; Joo et al., 2020; Scheyvens & Russel, 2012). This comprehensive approach recognizes that genuine empowerment extends beyond simply economic advantages (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). Further studies have expanded upon this framework, investigating different approaches to improve community participation in the planning and management of tourism. Aref (2011) conducted a study on the elements that affect the development of community capacity in tourism. The study highlighted the significance of local leadership and social capital. In a similar vein, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) investigated the impact of residents' faith in tourist institutions on their endorsement of sustainable tourism development. These studies show that successful community empowerment in tourism contexts necessitates a detailed comprehension of local social dynamics and power structures.

Numerous studies have been conducted on environmental conservation and tourism, with an emphasis on striking a balance between ecosystem protection and visitor access and enjoyment. O'Reilly (1986) introduced the concept of carrying capacity in relation to tourism, which has since developed into more advanced frameworks such as Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) and Visitor Impact Management (VIM) (Manning, 2002). These approaches acknowledge the necessity of employing adaptive management strategies that can effectively adjust to evolving environmental circumstances and visitor trends (Gregory et al., 2006; Millar et al., 2007). Research has demonstrated that in protected regions, effectively managed tourism can aid in conservation endeavors by raising awareness and providing additional financial resources (Buckley, 2012; Whitelaw et al., 2014). Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to overcome when it comes to efficiently monitoring and reducing the environmental effects of tourism, especially in vulnerable ecosystems (Canteiro et al., 2018; Jinghui et al., 2020). Recent studies have examined novel methods for environmental management in tourism, such as employing technology for visitation control and incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into conservation tactics (Libosada, 2009; Orams, 1996).

An emerging strategy that aims to combine environmental preservation and community empowerment within a framework of sustainable tourism is the People-Environmental Tourism Model (Cole, 2006; Ramkissoon, 2020). This paradigm expands on previous concepts such as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and community-based ecotourism

(CBET), but gives more importance to the dynamic connections between social and ecological systems (Berkes, 2004; Leach et al., 1999; Phelan et al., 2020). The approach acknowledges that local people play a crucial role in not only receiving benefits from tourism development but also actively managing and protecting their natural and cultural resources (Briassoulis, 2002; Eshefani & Albrecht, 2018). Research employing comparable methodologies has demonstrated encouraging outcomes in several settings. Stronza and Gordillo (2008) discovered that ecotourism initiatives in the Amazon, which focused on including local communities and sharing the benefits, resulted in better conservation results and greater well-being for the community. In a similar vein, Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) illustrated the manner in which community-based tourism in Ecuador facilitated the development of social-ecological resilience by reviving customary practices and reinforcing community institutions.

Extensive research has been conducted on the significance of governance and policy frameworks in promoting sustainable tourism development (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). There is an increasing acknowledgement of the value of employing multi-level and adaptable governance systems (Farmaki, 2015; Roxas et al., 2020). In their study, Eagles (2009) examined different governance models for protected areas and tourism, emphasizing the importance of establishing frameworks that can effectively reconcile conservation goals with the development of tourism. Adaptive co-management is increasingly recognized as a way to deal with the intricate and ever-changing characteristics of social-ecological systems in the field of tourism (Armitage et al., 2009; Plummer & Fennell, 2009). This approach prioritizes adaptable and cooperative decision-making processes that can effectively adapt to evolving circumstances and integrate a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints (Patterson et al., 2008). The study conducted by Bramwell and Lane (2011) emphasizes the significance of establishing forums for stakeholder discussion and implementing mechanisms for shared learning in order to achieve sustainable tourist governance. These studies indicate the necessity of governance frameworks that can enable continuous collaboration among local communities, government agencies, the commercial sector, and other stakeholders in order to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes.

Several studies have focused on the economic aspects of sustainable tourism, especially in rural and developing areas (Ibănescu et al., 2018; Villanueva-Álvaro et al., 2017). Although tourism is frequently advocated as a means of fostering economic growth, studies have demonstrated that the allocation of economic advantages can be markedly unequal, potentially worsening pre-existing disparities (Alam & Paramati, 2016; Mahadevan & Suardi, 2019; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012). The concept of pro-poor tourism has arisen as a method to tackle these challenges, focusing on techniques that produce overall advantages for the impoverished (Ashley et al., 2001; Chok et al., 2017; Harrison, 2008). Research has investigated many methods to improve the economic advantages that local communities can gain from tourism (Rogerson, 2006; Yamin et al., 2023). These methods include promoting the growth of local businesses, providing support for small-scale enterprises, and encouraging community-led tourism initiatives (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). Nevertheless, there are also obstacles to overcome in order to ensure that the economic advantages are fairly distributed and that the growth of tourism does not result in economic reliance or susceptibility to external disruptions (Alarcón & Cole, 2019; Boluk et al., 2019). A recent study has also investigated the capacity of tourism to contribute to wider sustainable development objectives, such as reducing poverty and promoting gender equality (Ferguson, 2011; Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019). These studies emphasize the necessity of implementing comprehensive strategies that take into account the various aspects of economic sustainability in the growth of tourism.

METHOD

The Kanigara region in Wonosobo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, serves as the main analytical unit for this study. The Kanigara area, which consists of three villages (Bener, Gadingrejo, and Burat), serves as a representative example of the problems and potential in developing rural tourism in Indonesia. This region is distinguished by its abundant natural resources, including as forests, waterfalls, and distinctive landscapes, as well as its cultural history, which makes it an excellent subject for analyzing the application of sustainable tourism strategies. By using Kanigara as the unit of research, we can thoroughly examine the intricate relationships between community empowerment, environmental conservation, and tourism development in a particular socio-ecological setting. The project focuses on a specific geographical area to gain a thorough

understanding of the elements that affect sustainable tourism outcomes at the local level. It also intends to generate insights that may be applied to other rural locations facing similar issues.

The study utilizes a qualitative research design, specifically employing a case study approach to capture the intricate dynamics of implementing sustainable tourism in the Kanigara region. The decision to use this methodology is based on the intricate nature of the study inquiries, which necessitate a thorough investigation of social processes, views, and real-life encounters of different individuals involved in the development of tourism. The case study technique facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the application of the People-Environmental Tourism Model, taking into account the historical, cultural, and environmental circumstances of the region (Yin, 2018). The study attempts to reveal detailed and contextual information about the complex connections between community empowerment, environmental conservation, and tourism development by using a qualitative approach. This methodology is especially suitable for examining the "how" and "why" inquiries related to the efficacy of sustainable tourism policies in rural regions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Several parties involved in or impacted by the growth of tourism in the Kanigara region are among the participants in this study. The sample strategy utilizes a purposive approach to guarantee the inclusion of important groups, such as local community members, tourism businesses, government officials, environmental conservationists, and tourists, in order to ensure representation. More precisely, the study focuses on 30 individuals distributed evenly across the three communities, with 10 responders from each hamlet. This sample comprises a diverse group of individuals, including local leaders, members of tourism management committees, small company owners, farmers, environmental activists, and officials from local and regional government organizations with responsibilities in tourism and environmental management. In addition, the research includes viewpoints from both local and foreign tourists who visit the area. The inclusion of a large range of participants enables a comprehensive examination of the process of implementing sustainable tourism, encompassing a wide array of perspectives and experiences. The participants are chosen based on their active participation in or extensive knowledge of tourism activities in the region, guaranteeing that the data gathered is pertinent and enlightening for the research goals.

The data gathering for this study utilizes a multi-method approach in order to achieve a thorough and comprehensive grasp of the research issue. The main approaches for collecting primary data are semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participant observation, and document analysis. Key informants from each stakeholder group are interviewed in-depth to thoroughly examine individual viewpoints and experiences on the implementation of sustainable tourism. The interviews, with a duration of around 60-90 minutes each, are recorded in audio format and then transcribed for analysis. Focus group talks are arranged to gather the collective opinions and encourage conversation about community empowerment and environmental conservation in relation to tourism development. Each discussion group consists of 6-8 participants. Participant observation is conducted at different tourism locations and community events to acquire direct and personal understanding of the interactions among tourists, local communities, and the environment. In addition, pertinent papers such as local tourism policies, environmental reports, and community development plans are examined to obtain contextual information and cross-reference data from other sources. By employing many methods, this strategy enables the researcher to triangulate the data, hence improving the validity and dependability of the research findings (Denzin, 2017).

For the purpose of finding, examining, and reporting patterns in the data, a thematic analysis technique, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), is used in the data analysis. The method commences with familiarization, wherein researchers deeply engage with the data by repeatedly reading transcripts and field notes. First, codes are methodically constructed for the full data collection, collecting pertinent data for each code. The codes are then categorized into possible themes, which are carefully examined and adjusted to ensure they appropriately represent the underlying meanings found in the entire dataset. Next, the themes are precisely defined and labeled, encapsulating the fundamental nature of each theme and identifying the specific part of the data that each theme represents. During this procedure, the researchers use ongoing comparative analysis to uncover similarities and differences among various data sources and participant groups. In order to bolster the credibility and reliability of the results, member verification is carried out with key informants to validate the accuracy of interpretations. In addition, researcher triangulation is used,

where different researchers independently code and analyze the data to ensure uniformity in interpretation. In the last phase, a scholarly report is created to provide the analysis. This report includes carefully chosen extract examples that effectively support the analysis and connect it to the study question and existing literature. This meticulous analytical method guarantees that the conclusions are firmly based on the data, while also offering valuable insights into the execution of sustainable tourism practices in the Kanigara region.

RESULTS

1. Community Engagement and Empowerment: Catalysts for Sustainable Tourism in Kanigara

The Kanigara region's growth as a tourism destination serves as an excellent example of a bottom-up strategy for community-driven tourism projects. This grassroots movement emerged from the local population, showcasing a significant degree of community involvement from the beginning. The initiative's grassroots approach is crucial as it guarantees that the tourism development is in line with the community's values, requirements, and ambitions (Dangi & Jamal, 2016; Renwick & Murphy, 1987; Taylor, 1995). The community-led approach is seen in the consensus established among the residents of the three villages - Burat, Bener, and Gadingrejo - to jointly designate the Kanigara area as a tourism zone. The consensual decision-making process demonstrates a significant level of community ownership and dedication to the project, which are essential elements for ensuring the long-term viability of tourist efforts in rural regions (Hwang et al., 2016; Tosun, 2006; Yang et al., 2021).

The extensive participation of the community in the Kanigara tourist project is supported by quantitative data obtained from a survey administered to local inhabitants (refer to Figure 1). The poll results indicate a significant level of support for community involvement in tourist development, as 8 respondents strongly agreed and 19 agreed on the importance of community engagement. Out of the replies, just 3 expressed disagreement, and there were no severe disagreements. This data offers strong evidence of the widespread community endorsement and involvement in the tourism development process in the Kanigara region. The survey results demonstrate a strong and favorable sentiment that is consistent with and strengthens the qualitative findings about the community's active involvement in developing the tourism strategy.

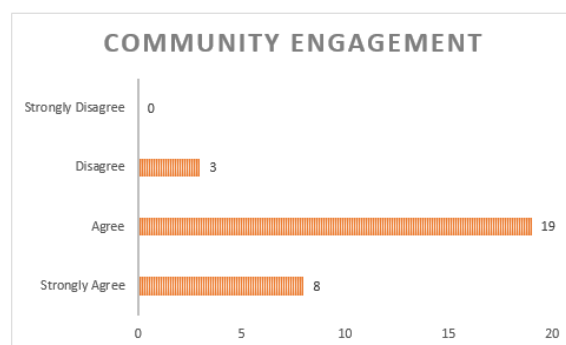


Figure 1. Community Engagement in Kanigara

The community's proactive approach in actively involving themselves with local government bodies showcases their empowerment and capacity to impact policy decisions. An important result of this involvement was the effective advocacy for the enactment of the Kanigara Area Decree (Wonosobo Regent's Decree No: 050/419/2022) by the Wonosobo Regency Government. This formal recognition is evidence of the community's successful promotion and its ability to negotiate bureaucratic procedures. The decree officially recognizes the Kanigara area as a tourism zone, establishing a legal framework for future development projects. This accomplishment emphasizes the significance of empowering the community to influence local tourist policies and illustrates the possibilities for working together in sustainable tourism development through collaborative governance (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Roxas et al., 2020).

The protection of the environment and cultural heritage stand out as fundamental principles that guide the Kanigara community's growth of tourism. The Kanigara tourism community has reached an agreement to protect both the natural environment and the existing cultural legacy,

demonstrating a comprehensive grasp of sustainable tourism principles. This commitment is remarkable because it showcases the community's recognition of the inherent connection between environmental soundness, cultural genuineness, and the sustainable future of tourism (Butler, 1991; Štreimikienė et al., 2020). The Kanigara community is establishing a foundation for a type of tourism that can maintain itself without exhausting the resources it relies on, by giving equal importance to conservation and development. This strategy is in line with internationally recognized principles of sustainable tourism, which prioritize the importance of achieving a harmonious and equitable development that takes into account the limitations of the environment and the cultural heritage (Landorf, 2009; Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011; UNESCO, 2009).

The Kanigara community demonstrates their strategic thinking and ability to capitalize on local resources by choosing to concentrate on agrotourism as a way of economic growth. The community's decision to embrace agrotourism as a means to boost the local economy displays their comprehension of the need of developing distinctive tourism experiences that are rooted in the region (Marin, 2015; Roels, 2020). Bršćić (2006) asserts that this technique is significant for multiple reasons. Firstly, it facilitates the integration of contemporary agricultural practices into the tourism sector, potentially minimizing interference with conventional livelihoods. Furthermore, agrotourism has the potential to provide several sources of revenue for local farmers, thereby strengthening their economic stability (Kizos & Tosifides, 2007). Finally, this type of tourism typically necessitates minimal infrastructure development, thereby preserving the area's natural essence (Apaza-Panca et al., 2020). The decision to engage in agrotourism demonstrates a deliberate evaluation of how to harmonize economic ambitions with the objectives of preserving the environment and culture (Hrymak et al., 2019; Phillip et al., 2010).



Figure 2. Wordcloud on Kanigara Community engagement

The results of data processing using the Maxqda program, which generated a word cloud displaying significant terms related to the endeavor, are used in Figure 2 to demonstrate the holistic approach to community engagement in Kanigara's tourism development. The frequent utilization of terminology such as "community", "environment", "sustainable", and "society" underscores the all-encompassing attitude embraced by the citizens of Kanigara. The graphical representation aligns with our quantitative and qualitative findings, highlighting the significance of community engagement and environmental elements in the process of tourism expansion. The inclusion of terms like "bottom-up," "cultural," and "agritourism" serves to underscore the program's focus on community engagement and its objective of safeguarding local culture while fostering sustainable economic opportunities. The word cloud functions as a powerful visual depiction of the main subjects and focal points that arose from our analysis of Kanigara's tourist operations.

An essential component of the Kanigara tourism community's community involvement approach is their dedication to conducting frequent socialization events in all three villages (Burat, Bener, and Gadingrejo). The continuous endeavors to inform and educate the wider society regarding tourism development activities fulfill many crucial roles (Butler, 1991; Khan et al., 2020). First and foremost, they facilitate the preservation of transparency in the development process, guaranteeing that all members of the community have access to information regarding plans and advancements (Simmons, 1994). Furthermore, these activities provide the receipt of ongoing feedback and input from a diverse group of individuals involved, promoting a feeling of inclusiveness and collective responsibility (Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). Finally, consistent social interaction can aid in establishing and sustaining community backing for tourist endeavors, which is crucial for their enduring triumph (Lee, 2013; Tosun, 2000). This method of including the community is in line with

the most effective methods of involving the community in the development of tourism and helps to strengthen the social connections within the community (Cheng et al., 2019; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011).

One of the main reasons for the initiative's success is the inclusive attitude that the Kanigara tourism community took while interacting with local government structures. The community showcases a comprehensive comprehension of the significance of multi-stakeholder collaboration by actively engaging village authorities, village heads, and sub-district heads in the process of tourism development. This technique fulfills multiple objectives. First and foremost, it guarantees that the growth of tourism is in line with the wider goals and laws of local authority. Moreover, it facilitates convenient access to information and support that may be available through formal channels. Furthermore, the participation of local authorities can confer credibility to the program, potentially enticing further backing from higher tiers of government or foreign collaborators. The utilization of this cooperative strategy serves as a prime example of the fundamental principles of effective management in the advancement of sustainable tourism (Beritelli, 2011; Vernon et al., 2005). It underscores the need of establishing alliances between community organizations and local governmental entities (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Repercussions for sustainable development and community empowerment are enormous from the bottom-up approach of the Kanigara tourism effort. The local community has assumed the role of the main stakeholder and decision-maker by initiating and leading the process of tourism development (Hwang et al., 2012). The significance of this degree of community agency is paramount for various reasons (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). First and foremost, it guarantees that the growth of tourism is in harmony with the specific requirements, principles, and ambitions of the local community, hence minimizing the possibility of adopting external frameworks that may not be suitable for the local circumstances (Štreimikienė et al., 2020). Furthermore, it cultivates a robust feeling of possession and accountability among individuals within the community, which is crucial for ensuring the initiative's enduring viability. Finally, this strategy enhances the community's ability and self-assurance, enabling them to tackle forthcoming difficulties and opportunities. The Kanigara case exemplifies the effectiveness of grassroots activities in promoting community empowerment within the framework of rural tourist development (Matarrita-Cascante, 2010).

Sustainable tourism principles are well understood by the Kanigara people, as seen by their comprehensive approach to tourism development that takes into account cultural, environmental, and economic factors. The community is aiming to establish a well-rounded and robust tourist model by prioritizing the growth of agrotourism, conservation of the environment, and preservation of cultural heritage (Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011; Manrique et al., 2016). The significance of this integrated strategy lies in its ability to tackle several aspects of sustainability, potentially reducing conflicts between economic benefits and environmental or cultural preservation (Nasser, 2003). The community's plan is in accordance with the principle of strong sustainability in tourism, which asserts that economic capital cannot be used as a direct replacement for natural and cultural capital (Hunter, 1997; Utama & Trimurti, 2020). The Kanigara community is strategically focusing on the preservation and improvement of all types of capital - including natural, cultural, and economic - in order to establish a really sustainable tourism destination.

The Kanigara tourist initiative's success in including both the local community and government officials provides vital insights for the sustainable development of tourism in other rural regions. The story exemplifies the capacity of community-driven initiatives to stimulate favorable transformation when bolstered by efficient engagement tactics and cooperative governance approaches (Osborne et al., 2021). The success of this campaign can be attributed to several key characteristics, namely the grassroots nature of its genesis, the active involvement of the community with local authorities, consistent attempts to foster social connections, and a comprehensive approach to promoting sustainability (Ansell & Gash, 2007). These aspects have jointly promoted a significant level of community empowerment and control over the process of tourism development (Christens & Inzeo, 2015). The Kanigara story serves as a compelling illustration of how local empowerment and cooperative strategies can foster the sustainable growth of tourism in rural communities globally. Subsequent studies could delve deeper into the lasting effects of this project and its feasibility for implementation in different settings, thereby adding to the expanding pool of information on sustainable tourism development driven by local communities (Ibănescu, 2018; Moscardo, 2008).

2. Balancing Conservation and Development: Environmental Stewardship in Kanigara's Tourism Sector

A strong dedication to environmental conservation and economic growth is seen in the Kanigara region's approach to tourism development. The adoption of this equitable strategy is essential for ensuring the enduring viability of the tourism industry and the conservation of the region's inherent resources (Hugo, 1998). The community's choice to prioritize environmental stewardship is based on their recognition that the region's natural integrity is not only inherently significant but also serves as the basis for its attractiveness to tourists (William & Ponford, 2009). This viewpoint is in line with the worldwide movement towards adopting more environmentally friendly and socially responsible approaches to tourism (Buckley, 2012; Dolnicar, 2020).

An analysis of the community's position on environmental development and conservation is shown quantitatively in Figure 3. The poll results indicate a robust consensus among participants, with the majority expressing agreement or strong agreement with the significance of maintaining a balance between environmental conservation and tourism development. More precisely, out of the total respondents, 22 agreed and 2 strongly agreed, whilst just 6 disagreed and none strongly disagreed. This data highlights the community's general positive disposition towards environmental conservation in the context of tourism growth. The significant level of consensus indicates that the community acknowledges the mutual reliance between environmental preservation and sustainable tourism, which is essential for the long-term sustainability of the industry (Angelkova et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2014).

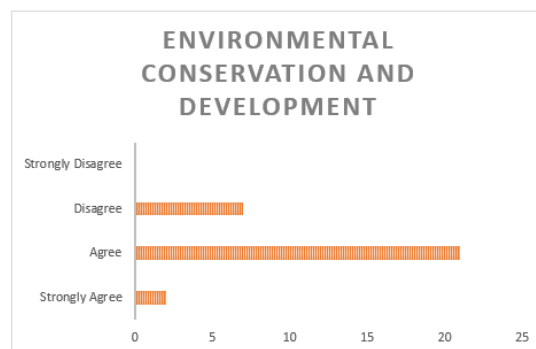


Figure 3. Environmental and Development Engagement

The community's willingness to maintain the current natural environment as part of their tourism development strategy serves as more evidence of their dedication to environmental conservation. This proactive approach to conservation is important because it shows foresight in preventing environmental deterioration before it happens, rather than trying to reduce damage afterwards (Lijklema, 1995). The Kanigara community is establishing a framework for sustainable development that can be emulated by other rural tourist projects by incorporating conservation objectives into the initial phases of tourism planning (Fennell, 2020; Kayat, 2014).

The decision to prioritize agrotourism as a major aspect of Kanigara's tourism offering is indicative of a calculated strategy to strike a balance between environmental preservation and economic growth. Agrotourism promotes the preservation of traditional farming techniques and landscapes, which in turn helps to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services (Beillouin et al., 2021). Ecotourism can offer financial benefits to farmers, encouraging them to maintain sustainable land management methods (Tschardt et al., 2005). This can help prevent detrimental changes or intensification of land use that may have negative impacts on the environment (Phillip et al., 2010; Tamburini et al., 2020).

Beyond simple preservation, the Kanigara community actively engages with environmental issues through regular socialization events. This is part of their approach to environmental stewardship. The initiatives aimed at educating and engaging the wider community in environmental conservation exemplify a dedication to fostering a sustainable culture that goes beyond the realm of tourism (Tauro et al., 2021). The community is establishing a solid basis for enduring conservation endeavors

that can resist the challenges posed by tourism development by promoting environmental consciousness and stewardship among its members (Bramwell et al., 2017; Murphy, 1998).



Figure 4. Wordcloud on Environment and Development in Kanigara Region

The importance of environmental considerations in the community's approach is visually reinforced by Figure 4, a word cloud created from important terms related to the Kanigara tourist program. The inclusion of phrases like "environment," "conservation," and "sustainable" in conjunction with terminology associated with development and tourism demonstrates the interconnectedness of the community's vision for their region. This visual representation provides evidence that supports both qualitative and quantitative data, demonstrating how environmental stewardship is an integral part of Kanigara's tourism development plan (Saarinen, 2014).

The participation of local government entities in the process of tourist development, as demonstrated by the community's initiatives to involve village officials, village heads, and sub-district heads, indicates the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach to environmental governance. The collaborative approach is essential for ensuring effective environmental management by aligning conservation activities with broader regional planning and regulatory frameworks (Ioppolo et al., 2016). Kanigara is enhancing the management of environmental consequences caused by tourism growth by promoting collaborations between community organizations and municipal authorities (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Graci, 2013).

Kanigara's tourism project is characterized by a bottom-up approach, prioritizing environmental conservation. This signifies a move towards more participative and locally-driven methods for developing sustainable tourism. This procedure is critical since it empowers neighborhood communities to expect control over both the financial prospects and natural commitments connected to tourism (MacNeill & Wozniak, 2018). By entrusting decision-making authority to individuals who are most impacted by and have a significant stake in the local environment, this approach enhances the probability of attaining really sustainable results (Newig & Fritsch, 2009; Tolkach & King, 2015).

At long last, the way that the Kanigara locale has adjusted improvement and preservation in its tourism industry gives shrewd data around how economical tourism standards are really put into hone. The community's unwavering dedication to environmental stewardship, as indicated by survey data, their emphasis on agrotourism, and their holistic approach to conservation and development, showcases the feasibility of achieving economic expansion through tourism without compromising ecological integrity (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2019). This case study emphasizes the significance of community-driven efforts, collaboration among several stakeholders, and the incorporation of environmental factors throughout all phases of tourist planning and development. The Kanigara concept serves as a compelling illustration of how rural communities can assume a leadership role in establishing ecologically conscious tourism destinations, amidst the ongoing sustainability issues faced by the global tourism sector (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Gannon, 1994).

3. Implementing the People-Environmental Tourism Model: Challenges and Opportunities in Kanigara

Kanigara's adoption of the People-Environmental Tourism Model marks a dramatic turn in the direction of environmentally conscious and locally-driven tourism growth. This perspective, which emphasizes the integration of local community needs and environmental conservation, offers an optimistic approach to addressing the various challenges of rural tourism development (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). The implementation of this approach in Kanigara is especially remarkable

considering the abundant natural resources and cultural heritage of the region, which serve as the basis for its tourism prospects. The effectiveness of this method depends on skillfully managing the balance between economic development, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment (Roseland, 2000; Scheyvens, 1999).

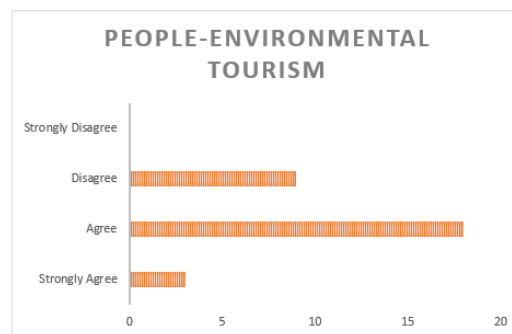


Figure 5. People-Environmental Tourism Model in Kanigara Region

The perspective of the People-Environmental Tourism Model by the community is depicted in Figure 5. The survey findings indicate a significant approval of this method, with 20 respondents in agreement and 3 strongly supporting its execution. In contrast, a mere 9 participants expressed disagreement, and none of them strongly disagreed. The data indicates a significant level of community support for the approach, which is essential for its effective execution. The favorable welcome signifies that the community acknowledges the potential advantages of this integrated approach to tourist development, in line with research that underscores the significance of local backing in sustainable tourism endeavors (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011).

An essential advantage of the People-Environmental Tourism Model in Kanigara is its grassroots approach, which is initiated by the community itself. This grassroots effort exemplifies a significant degree of local autonomy and responsibility, which are essential elements in the development of sustainable tourism. The community plays a pivotal role in guiding the development process, ensuring that tourism activities are closely aligned with local values, needs, and aspirations (Khalid et al., 2019). This method differs from top-down tourism development models that frequently neglect to sufficiently address local problems or exploit local knowledge. The program in Kanigara, which is led by the community, enhances the probability of long-term sustainability and resilience in the presence of external difficulties (Darmi et al., 2023; Lew et al., 2016; Tolkach & King, 2015).

There are opportunities and challenges associated with Kanigara's tourism strategy's emphasis on agrotourism. Agrotourism provides an opportunity to expand local economies while also safeguarding traditional agricultural techniques and landscapes (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2011). This strategy can offer supplementary sources of revenue for farmers and contribute to the preservation of the region's rural ambiance, which frequently serves as a significant allure for tourists (Yadav et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the difficulty is in creating agrotourism experiences that are genuine and attractive to tourists, while also guaranteeing that agricultural practices remain environmentally responsible and do not become excessively marketed. Achieving this equilibrium necessitates meticulous strategizing and continuous supervision to avert the commercialization of indigenous culture and the over utilization of natural resources (Phillip et al., 2010; Rist & Dahdouh-Guebas, 2006).

One important aspect of the Kanigara community's tourist development strategy is their strong commitment to environmental conservation and cultural preservation. By giving equal importance to these factors in addition to economic development, the community is establishing the foundation for genuinely sustainable tourism. This comprehensive strategy acknowledges the interconnectedness of environmental preservation, cultural authenticity, and the attractiveness of tourism (Zhang et al., 2019). Nevertheless, sustaining this equilibrium amidst the growth of tourism endeavors will necessitate continuous endeavor and perhaps challenging compromises. The task at hand is to create systems that guarantee the integrity of conservation and preservation initiatives, even in the face of mounting economic demands or a rise in the number of visitors (Bramwell et al., 2017; Lambin & Meyfroidt, 2011).



Figure 6. Wordcloud on People-Environmental Tourism Model in Kanigara Region

Figure 6 illustrates the complex nature of the People-Environmental tourist Model implementation through a word cloud created from important terms related to the Kanigara tourist effort. The use of phrases like "environment," "tourism," "society," and "cultural," in conjunction with "opportunities" and "challenge," demonstrates the intricate interaction of various aspects within this approach. The graphic depiction emphasizes the interconnectedness of the model, showcasing both the possible benefits and the difficulties in managing different components of sustainable tourist growth (Kristjánsdóttir et al., 2018; Saarinen, 2014).

An important tactic for establishing and preserving community support is the frequent socialization events organized by the Kanigara tourism community in each of the three villages (Burat, Bener, and Gadingrejo). These endeavors to educate and involve the wider community in tourism development programs have several crucial purposes, such as ensuring transparency, collecting input, and cultivating a sense of shared responsibility (Simmons, 1994). Nevertheless, maintaining these efforts to engage stakeholders for an extended period can be difficult, especially as the project expands and potentially becomes more intricate. Maintaining widespread engagement and avoiding the accumulation of benefits among a select few stakeholders will be persistent obstacles (Loureiro et al., 2020; Tosun, 2006).

The community's ability to traverse bureaucratic processes and affect policy is demonstrated by the successful engagement with local government entities, as proven by the issue of the Kanigara Area Decree (Wonosobo Regent's Decree No: 050/419/2022). This accomplishment establishes a robust legal basis for the tourist project and demonstrates successful coordination among multiple stakeholders. Nevertheless, the task of balancing productive partnerships with government agencies and protecting community autonomy in decision-making necessitates continuous negotiation and diplomacy. The difficulty lies in utilizing government assistance and resources while maintaining the grassroots nature of the program (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Walker & McCarthy, 2010).

The implementation of the People-Environmental Tourism Show in Kanigara provides significant insights into the opportunities and obstacles of community-driven sustainable tourism development (Grilli, 2021). The robust community backing, emphasis on ecological preservation and cultural safeguarding, and effective collaboration with governmental bodies establish a strong basis for achievement (Brooks et al., 2012). Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to overcome in order to preserve the fragile equilibrium between economic progress, environmental conservation, and community empowerment as the project expands (Tallis et al., 2008). The Kanigara case exemplifies that the People-Environmental tourist Model presents a hopeful strategy for achieving sustainable tourist growth. However, its effective execution necessitates continuous endeavor, adaptable management, and a dedication to participatory decision-making procedures. The experiences gained from Kanigara can provide valuable insights for comparable projects in other rural regions that are grappling with the challenge of achieving a harmonious balance between tourism growth and environmental and social sustainability (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Villanueva-Álvaro et al., 2017).

DISCUSSION

Significant insights into the dynamics of community-driven sustainable tourism development in rural regions can be gained from Kanigara's application of the People-Environmental Tourism Model. The success of this strategy in Kanigara can be ascribed to its robust focus on community involvement, ecological preservation, and cultural safeguarding. The bottom-up strategy, which emerges from the community itself, has cultivated a significant degree of local ownership and engagement, both of which are essential elements in sustainable tourism endeavors. This is consistent with the

conclusions drawn by Tolkach and King (2015), who highlight the significance of community agency in the process of tourism development. The model's resonance with local values and goals is underscored by the significant community support it has received. This is evident from the survey findings, which indicate that 23 out of 30 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with its implementation. Nevertheless, the fact that 7 respondents expressed disagreement indicates that there are still obstacles to overcome in order to achieve complete agreement and support from the community. This emphasizes the importance of continuous involvement and communication.

An inventive method of striking a balance between economic growth and environmental and cultural preservation is Kanigara's emphasis on agrotourism as a fundamental element of its tourism strategy. This approach is in line with the increasing worldwide focus on experience and sustainable tourism, as mentioned by Phillip et al. (2010). Kanigara has developed a distinctive tourist opportunity by utilizing established agricultural methods and landscapes. This has the potential to generate extra sources of income for local farmers, while preserving the rural ambiance of the area. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this strategy will rely on meticulous administration to avoid excessive commercialization and guarantee the authenticity and sustainability of agricultural practices. The community's dedication to environmental protection, demonstrated by their willingness to protect current natural habitats, indicates a strong basis for the development of sustainable agrotourism. However, it is essential to continuously evaluate and employ adaptive management strategies in order to preserve this equilibrium as tourism activities continue to grow.

Effective multi-stakeholder collaboration in tourism governance is demonstrated by the Kanigara community's proactive involvement with local government entities, which culminated in the issue of the Kanigara Area Decree. This accomplishment is consistent with the conclusions of Beaumont & Dredge (2010) regarding the significance of networked strategies in the management of local tourism. The legal status granted by the decree establishes a strong basis for the tourist project, potentially enabling easier access to resources and assistance. Nevertheless, the difficulty is in sustaining this fruitful association with governmental organizations while safeguarding the grassroots character of the program. With the growth of the tourism sector, there might be a greater demand to establish and standardize decision-making procedures, which might potentially weaken the grassroots nature of the effort. Achieving a harmonious equilibrium between utilizing government assistance and preserving community independence will be a significant obstacle in the future.

Maintaining community support and engagement is largely dependent on the regular socialization events that take place in the three villages of Burat, Bener, and Gadingrejo. These endeavors are in accordance with Tosun's (2006) emphasis on the significance of continuous community involvement in the development of tourism. Through the promotion of openness, the collection of feedback, and the cultivation of a sense of communal ownership, these actions actively contribute to the social sustainability of the initiative. Nevertheless, additional research is needed to determine the extent to which these initiatives are successful in reaching all sectors of the population, especially potentially disadvantaged populations. As the tourism project expands, it will become more crucial to ensure fair and balanced participation and distribution of benefits in order to avoid the consolidation of power and resources within a limited number of stakeholders.

Kanigara's tourism development strategy incorporates environmental protection and cultural preservation at its core, demonstrating a comprehensive commitment to sustainability. This is consistent with the increasing acknowledgement in tourism literature of the necessity to take into account environmental and cultural factors in addition to economic growth (Bramwell et al., 2017). The community's dedication to conserving both natural ecosystems and cultural legacy demonstrates a sophisticated comprehension of the interconnectedness between these elements and the attractiveness of tourism. Nevertheless, ensuring the preservation of this equilibrium while accommodating the growth of tourism would necessitate continuous endeavor and perhaps challenging compromises. The goal is to create procedures that prevent conservation and preservation efforts from being undermined by rising economic pressures or greater tourist numbers. The community's long-term success hinges on their capacity to adjust their methods in accordance with evolving circumstances, all the while remaining committed to their fundamental principles and objectives of sustainability.

Finally, the application of the People-Environmental Tourism Model in Kanigara provides important insights for the development of sustainable tourism in rural areas. The community-driven nature, concentration on agrotourism, commitment to environmental and cultural preservation, and effective stakeholder engagement are the main assets of this. Nevertheless, there are still obstacles to overcome in order to sustain these favorable qualities as the initiative expands and confronts mounting external pressures. The Kanigara case exemplifies the need for continuous effort, adaptive management, and a dedication to participatory decision-making processes when implementing community-based initiatives in sustainable tourism. The experiences from Kanigara can serve as valuable insights for similar programs in other rural regions, as worldwide interest in sustainable and community-based tourism continues to expand. Future research should prioritize doing longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of this approach and investigate methods for expanding these projects while upholding their fundamental principles of sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this research is that the People-Environmental Tourism Model has been successfully implemented in Kanigara, proving the feasibility of community-driven sustainable tourism development in rural locations. The efficacy of the strategy is demonstrated by robust community backing, as 23 out of 32 respondents have endorsed its implementation, and by the successful amalgamation of environmental preservation and economic advancement through agrotourism. The bottom-up method, which has its roots in the community, has facilitated significant levels of local ownership and engagement, which are essential for the long-term viability of the program. In addition, the community's active involvement with the local government, which led to official recognition through the Kanigara Area Decree, demonstrates the possibility for successful collaboration between several stakeholders in tourism management. These findings emphasize the significance of community agency, environmental stewardship, and adaptive governance in attaining sustainable tourism outcomes in rural areas.

The use of the People-Environmental Tourism Model in a rural Indonesian environment is empirically demonstrated in this research, which adds to the body of knowledge on sustainable tourism. This study expands upon current theoretical frameworks by illustrating how community-driven efforts can successfully achieve a harmonious equilibrium between economic development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. The study's conclusions about the impact of agrotourism on sustainable rural development provide fresh perspectives on measures for diversifying rural economies. Furthermore, this research adds to the expanding collection of literature on tourist governance by demonstrating the intricacies of collaboration between communities and governments in the planning and management of tourism. The study offers useful insights for researchers and practitioners aiming to develop more sustainable and inclusive types of tourism in rural areas worldwide by examining both the accomplishments and obstacles of applying this approach.

The limitations of this study must be acknowledged, despite the fact that it provides vital information. The research concentrated on a solitary case study in Kanigara, which, although offering comprehensive comprehension, may restrict the applicability of findings to other circumstances. The study's utilization of self-reported data from community members and stakeholders may bring inherent biases in the evaluation of the model's performance. Furthermore, the research offers a brief overview of the effort at a particular moment, and longitudinal studies would be required to comprehensively evaluate the long-term viability and effects of the People-Environmental Tourism Model. Future research could overcome these constraints by performing comparative studies across numerous rural tourism sites, using a wider range of data gathering methods, and establishing sustained monitoring of social, economic, and environmental consequences. Although there are certain limitations, this study establishes a strong basis for future research on the development of sustainable tourism in rural regions, with a focus on community involvement.

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