

# Discussion in Pinang Malaysia: Community Empowerment of Village Tourism Development

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*Abstract: Village Tourism is a comprehensive concept encompassing attractions, facilities, community, and tourism aspects to enhance village well-being and cultural appreciation through various tourism forms. Principles involve local empowerment, economic growth, community involvement, and technology use. It adheres to sustainability, creativity, efficiency, social justice, and environmental awareness. The goal is economic growth while preserving culture. Functions include cultural preservation, community-based tourism, and education. Effective strategies, government roles, and stakeholder involvement are essential for sustainable village tourism. The activity involved visiting Disted College, George Town, Malaysia, to deepen my understanding of village tourism through discussions with academic expert Professor Vikneswaran Nair. Responsible rural tourism preserves the environment and culture and provides socio-economic opportunities. Successful and unsuccessful case studies from various Asian countries are analyzed to learn about future responsible rural tourism development.*

## Keywords:

*Village Tourism, Community Engagement, Rural Development, Pinang Malaysia*

## Introduction

Village Tourism is a tourist destination encompassing attractions, public facilities, tourism amenities, accessibility, and an interconnected community that complements the realization of tourism. Village Tourism aims to enhance the well-being of the village community and increase awareness and pride in local customs, culture, and the village itself while developing the potential of cultural tourism, agro-tourism, water tourism, spiritual tourism, nature tourism, and sports tourism. It also involves preserving cultural values passed down through generations.

Community empowerment should be integrated into village tourism development, aiming to improve the self-sufficiency and well-being of communities through enhancing knowledge, attitudes, skills, behavior, abilities, and public

awareness (UU-RI, 2014). Community empowerment is an ongoing process that enhances community capacities, promotes independence, and raises living standards (Kagungan, 2019). In this process, communities collaboratively identify issues and potentials, create action plans based on assessments, execute these plans, and consistently monitor and evaluate progress and outcomes. Empowerment principles emphasize localized development, prioritizing social activities, utilizing strategies from local communities or social organizations, ensuring equal working relationships, employing participatory strategies engaging all group members, and striving for social welfare and justice (Helmita, 2021). (Kennedy, 2022)

The principles of Village Tourism development involve empowering local wisdom, improving the community's economy, engaging community participation, and utilizing digital technology. The development is guided by principles of benefit and sustainability, creativity and participation, efficiency, and effectiveness, as well as social justice and environmental awareness. The scope of Village Tourism development includes arranging and managing tourist areas within the village's territory. This arrangement and management align with community interests and values related to social, cultural, religious, and environmental aspects.

Village Tourism development aims to organize and manage the potential resources of the tourism sector to enhance the economic income of the community for their well-being. It includes safeguarding, protecting, and preserving cultural traditions and local wisdom to strengthen national culture and leverage cultural potential for empowering creative economies within the community. Village Tourism development also supports broader tourism advancement, providing encouragement, motivation, and opportunities for the community as key actors in village tourism development.

The functions of Village Tourism development include preserving arts and culture, promoting community-based tourism, education, and recreation. By developing village tourism, we can improve community well-being, preserve culture, and advance the tourism sector in Indonesia. The growing awareness of the significance of cultural preservation, environmental care, and community empowerment in tourism has sparked interest in village tourism development.

The community also plays a significant role in the concept of a smart village and smart tourism. Smart tourism harmoniously uses Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) with tourism programs. Utilizing technological progress is crucial for boosting tourism. The community is not just a target of

government and village efforts but also an active entity shaping its path. Employing information and communication technology advancements is a means to enhance tourism (Höjer et al., 2015). (Kennedy, 2022a)

Nonetheless, a deeper understanding of effective development strategies and the roles of government and stakeholders is still essential for fostering sustainable village tourism. Therefore, this activity aims to delve into best practices and challenges in village tourism development and identify steps to enhance community-based tourism development at the village level.

## Method

The community engagement activity was carried out through a visit to Disted College, located at 340, Jalan Macalister, George Town, 10350 George Town, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. This activity was part of the research on Village Tourism in the Lake Toba Tourism Area in Toba, Simalungun, and Samosir Regency. The paper detailing this activity used a qualitative method involving a literature review, documentation, field observations, and unstructured interviews with individuals during the activity.

The activity aimed to enhance understanding of village tourism through discussions with academics from universities outside Indonesia. The implementation method began with planning meetings, material preparation, execution, and evaluation.



**Figure 1.** Heading to Disted College, Pinang, Malaysia

We contacted the President of Disted College due to his expertise in Rural Tourism, specifically Vikneswaran Nair. Vikneswaran Nair is a Professor in Sustainable Tourism. He spent 19 years (2020) at Taylor's University, Malaysia, as a full Professor of Sustainable Tourism and Programme Leader for the Responsible

Rural Tourism Network. “His research specialization includes Sustainable and Responsible Tourism, Rural Tourism, Ecotourism Management, Environmental Management, Community-based Tourism, and Green Tourism (Nair et al., 2020).”

## Result

A discussion to delve into rural development, specifically for village tourism, was held with Professor Vikneswaran Nair. Nair explained that the rural tourism sector has become a key driver of social and economic growth and a primary source of income for developing and low-income countries across various parts of Asia. Rural tourism has contributed to the income of Asian countries, reducing poverty and improving the quality of life. Over time, rural tourism has been recognized as a solution, enhancing the economic potential of marginalized areas, revitalizing social aspects, and improving rural communities' living conditions. Responsible rural tourism supports the preservation of natural environments, protects cultural authenticity, and offers socio-economic opportunities and advantages for local communities. Case studies from different Asian countries examine successful and unsuccessful efforts in developing responsible rural tourism and the lessons that can be adopted and adapted for future responsible rural tourism in the region. (Nair et al., 2020)



**Figure 2.** Discussion with Professor Vikneswaran Nair

From a sustainable development perspective, responsible rural tourism supports ecological and socio-cultural conservation while generating economic benefits and income for regional and rural communities. Rural tourism is beneficial for peripheral communities from socio-economic and socio-ecological viewpoints. Defining rural tourism universally is challenging due to variations in how regions, countries, and cultures distinguish and explain rurality. It should be defined based on

each country's rural economic context and social development stage. It should not merely extend urban tourism to rural areas. An Asia-specific sense of space, emphasizing the harmony between humans and nature, is consistent in discussions about rural tourism. Focusing on various forms of responsible rural tourism and understanding their implications for future development and planning is crucial (Meng Qu, 2021).

## **Discussion**

Village tourism businesses need to reflect the traditions and local wisdom of the community. Local wisdom comprises values, norms, traditions, or habits passed down through generations that reflect the lifestyle of a specific community. The development of these businesses is pivotal for Village Tourism. They support the creation of attractions, manage tourism areas, provide necessary information, and offer services that enhance the overall experience for tourists. The involvement of local businesses not only bolsters the economy but also preserves the cultural and environmental essence of the village. Such businesses should align with the principles of community-based development and sustainability, thereby contributing to the holistic growth of village tourism (Banyuwangi, 2017).

### ***Village Tourism Development (Bup-Karo, 2019)***

Village Tourism Development aims to achieve several goals: enhancing the quality and quantity of the village tourism destination, creating opportunities for the local community as participants, workers, and owners of tourism businesses in and around the village, and expediting the adoption of attitudes and skills aligned with Indonesia's "Pesona Sapta Pariwisata" (The Seven Charms of Indonesian Tourism). The development targets for Village Tourism encompass (Bup-Karo, 2019; Banyuwangi, 2017):

- 1) **Raising Awareness:** Cultivating an understanding among the local community and residents about the significance of environmental planning and preservation. This effort ensures the conservation of existing cultural and tourism potential.
- 2) **Empowerment and Opportunities:** Encouraging, motivating, and generating opportunities for the people in the Village Tourism area and its vicinity to actively engage as participants, workers, and owners in the tourism industry.

- 3) Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Models: Developing a Village Tourism model based on sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism development practices.
- 4) Integration of Development: Integrating development efforts by identifying and analyzing existing potential, determining landscape arrangements for site areas, and creating feasible development alternatives.
- 5) Zoning Implementation: Executing the planning of Village Tourism based on a zoning system that aids in environmental preservation, enhances the quality of Village Tourism development, and ensures visitor satisfaction.
- 6) Authentic Village Setting: Establishing the Village Tourism destination according to traditional village patterns and architectural styles.
- 7) Preservation of Culture: Strengthening the local community's capacity to preserve, explore, and cultivate the diversity of arts and cultural aspects. It enriches the array of visitor tourist attractions and showcases the regional uniqueness of resources within the village.

Village Tourism Development encompasses village attractions, marketing, and institutions. Developing village attractions involves empowering the community, enhancing tourism attractions, developing infrastructure, providing public facilities, and creating integrated and sustainable village tourism facilities (Banyuwangi, 2017).

Marketing of Village Tourism involves "cooperative, integrated, and sustainable marketing involving all stakeholders, with responsible marketing strategies to build the Regional Image as a competitive Village Tourism destination." Regional promotion of the Village Tourism area aims to enhance the regional Village Tourism image, attract foreign tourists with special interests, increase domestic tourist visits and spending, and boost funding from sources other than the National and Regional Budgets, adhering to relevant laws and regulations (Sumargana et al., 2022; Bup-Karo, 2019).

Institutional development for Village Tourism includes building the organizational capacity of local government, the private sector, and the community. Additionally, it entails establishing mechanisms, operations, and tourism systems.

### ***Empowerment-Based Village Tourism Development Strategy***

Village Tourism Development should align with the Tourism Development Master Plan and Medium-Term Regional Development Plan and be an integral part of the Long-Term Development Plan of the Local Government (Bup-Karo, 2019). The

strategy for village tourism development includes (Desa-Nita, 2014; Sumargana et al., 2022):

- 1) Identifying Cultural Values: Recognizing and preserving cultural values with potential for conservation and growth.
- 2) Empowering Tourism Potential: Empowering the potential of village tourism to be built and developed.
- 3) Establishing Cultural Forums: Institutionalizing platforms to realize village culture and tourism within strategic events at the village, regional, and national levels.
- 4) Enhancing Coordination and Communication: Boosting coordination, information sharing, promotion, and communication between the Village Government, Local Government, and cross-actor/regional networks to foster sustainable village tourism development.

Models and forms of village tourism development can encompass (Desa-Nita, 2014; Sari et al., 2022):

- 1) Nature Tourism: Showcasing natural resources like protected forests and community plantations in agrotourism models.
- 2) Cultural Tourism: Highlighting cultural traditions and local wisdom, encompassing traditional ceremonies, music, dances, cultural sites, local crafts, culinary arts, and other cultural characteristics of the village.
- 3) Religious Tourism: Featuring religious traditions and sites like religious buildings and archaeological sites.
- 4) Manufacturing Tourism: Showcasing individual and group creations, including visual arts, paintings, recreational gardens, galleries, and local cultural studios.
- 5) Attractive Tourism: Presenting traditional performances and evolving creations such as traditional games, cultural shows, entertainment, and other performance types.

Empowering the village involves combining natural, cultural, religious, and artificial tourism elements. The local community should be involved in the Village Tourism Development process, offering insights, information on potential issues, and development plans. Feedback is directed to the Village Tourism Manager (Bup-Dairi, 2020).



Local governments must prioritize community empowerment concepts to facilitate and execute village tourism development efforts. Community empowerment is coordinated with organized community groups, guided by transparency, participation, and accountability principles, and reflects the existing and evolving social and cultural values. In the context of conservation and management of village tourism, working groups can be formed through community organizations, like Village Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis), which partner with the Village Government to develop and sustain village tourism independently. All of these are regulated through the Village Head's Regulation, established as part of implementing the Village Regulation and higher-level legislation (Desa-Nita, 2014).

### *Village Tourism Management and Development*

The local community oversees Village Tourism Management through Village Awareness Groups or Village-Owned Enterprises. The Village Tourism Manager is responsible for organizing and overseeing Village Tourism, which involves managing attraction activities, promotions, tourism business registration, facilities and infrastructure, security, and other related tasks while promoting existing tourism businesses. The Village Tourism Manager coordinates with regional authorities responsible for tourism affairs (Bup-Dairi, 2020).

Village tourism development is executed through planning and implementing tourism activities that showcase the diversity, uniqueness, distinctive cultural traditions, and local wisdom while prioritizing environmental preservation. "Village Tourism Development includes (1) Village Tourism Infrastructure Development; (2) Tourism Industry Development; (3) Village Tourism Marketing; (4) Village Tourism Institutional Strengthening; and (5) Partnership Collaboration (Bup-Dairi, 2020; Surabaya, 2014)."

- 1) Infrastructure Development encompasses: "Developing central village industry facilities and infrastructure; Developing creative industry and rural household industry infrastructure; Developing transportation and communication infrastructure; and developing other necessary infrastructure (Sumargana et al., 2022)."
- 2) Tourism Industry Development, including local tourism industry advancement; enhancing tourism product competitiveness; tourism business partnerships; and social, cultural, and environmental responsibility (Desa-Nita, 2014).



- 3) Tourism Destination Development, including community empowerment; attraction development; and tourism infrastructure development. Empowerment involves involving Creative Economy Businesses, Productive Economy Businesses, and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in supporting local tourism product provision. Attraction development is executed through organizing and managing tourist sites and diversifying cultural attractions in the village. Tourism infrastructure development can optimize facilities reflecting local characteristics, ensuring an integrated and sustainable approach (Desa-Nita, 2014).
- 4) Village Tourism Institutional Strengthening, covering the development of the Village Tourism Management Organization; local tourism organization development; village government and legal entity growth; local tourism capacity building; and cross-sector partnerships. Developing the village tourism management organization involves enhancing tourism management and community empowerment. Enhancing the local tourism organization includes developing community organizations and entrepreneur groups through cooperatives and SMEs (Desa-Nita, 2014).
- 5) Partnership Collaboration, involving cross-sector and cross-sector collaboration in village tourism development. Village tourism development necessitates cross-sector support, pushing for private-sector engagement through partnerships or business collaborations with the Local Government. Empowering the village community and the partnership between the Local Government and private actors require clear regulatory frameworks (Desa-Nita, 2014).

In Village Tourism development, sustainable management is crucial to ensuring the ongoing appeal of attractions, local community empowerment, and environmental preservation. Local governments and village communities must collaborate to formulate a balanced and sustainable development plan, respecting local wisdom while meeting tourist needs while upholding the cultural and environmental integrity of the village.

## **Conclusion**

Village tourism development is a crucial strategy for fostering sustainable tourism. It involves empowering local communities, conserving culture and the environment, and collaborating with local authorities and stakeholders. This

development encompasses several aspects, including tourism business management, community empowerment, marketing, infrastructure, and cross-sector partnerships. To achieve this development, it is essential to respect local cultural values, prioritize environmental preservation, and ensure sustainable management for the lasting appeal of tourist attractions and the community's well-being.

### **Recommendations:**

1. **Community Empowerment:** Prioritize local community empowerment throughout all stages of village tourism development. Involve them in planning, decision-making, and managing tourist attractions and related businesses.
2. **Cultural and Environmental Integration:** Ensure that village tourism development does not solely focus on economic aspects but also preserves and promotes cultural heritage while protecting the natural environment.
3. **Education and Training:** Provide training and education to the local community about sustainable tourism management, marketing, and other skills supporting tourism businesses.
4. **Partnerships:** Form strong partnerships between local governments, the private sector, and the local community. Such partnerships can create mutually beneficial synergies and support sustainable development.
5. **Environmental Management:** Implement responsible environmental management practices to minimize the negative impacts of tourism activities on ecosystems.
6. **Promotion and Marketing:** Undertake effective marketing efforts to enhance the image and attractiveness of the village tourism. Leverage digital technology and social networks to reach a wider audience.
7. **Infrastructure Development:** Ensure supportive infrastructure such as transportation, sanitation, and accessibility is well-arranged and managed to provide comfort and safety for tourists.
8. **Youth Involvement:** Engage the younger generation in village tourism development. It can foster fresh ideas and creativity vital in creating engaging tourist experiences.
9. **Continuous Evaluation and Improvement:** Regularly evaluate village tourism development and management.
10. **Intellectual Property Protection:** For community crafts businesses, ensure legal protection through registering Intellectual Property Rights for the products created.

Village tourism development is a collaborative effort that demands commitment and collaboration from various stakeholders. By integrating cultural values, community empowerment, and environmental protection, village tourism development can generate sustainable positive impacts on the local community and the national tourism sector.

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