



Exploring the Potential of Social Enterprise-Based Development for Rural Tourism Destinations: A Strategic Approach in Desa Cibubuan, Sumedang

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Abstract. This study investigates the potential of social enterprise-based development as a strategic approach to enhancing rural tourism in Desa Cibubuan, Sumedang. By integrating social entrepreneurship principles with rural tourism development, this research aims to identify sustainable strategies that can promote economic growth, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. Through a combination of literature review, field observations, and stakeholder interviews, the study explores how social enterprises can address local challenges and create value for the community. Key findings suggest that social enterprises can effectively mobilize local resources, foster community participation, and ensure long-term sustainability. The implications of these findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars interested in leveraging social entrepreneurship for rural development. This research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism and offers a practical framework for implementing social enterprise initiatives in rural settings.

Keywords: *Rural tourism, Social enterprise, Community empowerment, Sustainable tourism*

Introduction

The development of tourism villages has become a major focus in the global tourism industry, especially in countries that rely on their rural tourism potential. Tourism villages are seen as places that combine natural beauty, local wisdom, and authentic experiences for travelers seeking a different experience from conventional tourist destinations. In recent years, the phenomenon of tourism villages has experienced rapid growth in various parts of the world, including Indonesia.

Rural tourism destinations have significant potential for economic growth, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. This potential can be harnessed through the implementation of a social enterprise-based development approach. Utilizing social entrepreneurship principles, this approach integrates the goals of sustainable development and community welfare with rural tourism development. By creating

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social enterprises in rural tourism destinations, local challenges can be effectively addressed and valuable opportunities for economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits can be generated for the community.

The existing tourism policy in Desa Cibubuan, Sumedang, however, may overlook the socio-cultural and environmental concerns and focus primarily on economic sustainability. Along with rapid development, various issues have emerged that need serious attention. One of the main issues raised is the social, economic, and environmental impact of uncontrolled tourism village growth. This includes increased pressure on natural resources, changes in the lifestyles of local communities, economic disparities between tourism business owners and local residents, and damage to culture and local wisdom due to excessive commercialization.

Sumedang Regency is located about 45 km from Bandung City, along the main Bandung–Cirebon route, making it a potential area for tourism links between these two cities, which are already well-developed in tourism. Sumedang Regency comprises two districts, North Sumedang and South Sumedang, with 270 villages that have various tourism potentials that can be developed as tourism village destinations.

One serious problem is the uneven development of tourism destination areas, which is more prioritized in South Sumedang, while North Sumedang has many promising tourism potentials. This is further supported by the development of the Cisumdawu Toll Road, in which routes from Cileunyi (Padaleunyi Toll Road) to Dawuan (Cipali Toll Road/Majalengka) are in their final stages of completion. Another crucial issue is that the potential is not managed collectively; it remains separate, individual, and conventional on a small scale. The human resources lack tourism awareness and supportive skills, and the community institutions are poorly organized in establishing business networks related to the tourism industry, such as attractions, accommodation, transportation, amenities, and institutional support.

Furthermore, there are still challenges related to the management and sustainable development of tourism villages. Lack of infrastructure, shortage of skilled labor, limited market access, and a lack of understanding of sustainable development principles often hinder the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism villages in the long term. Most villagers still do not realize that the tourism potential can be used as a new livelihood apart from their usual livelihood. The people do not even know what to do to make their village a tourist destination. Thus, people who have a mission and vision for developing village tourism areas are needed. [1]

Therefore, studies on the development of social enterprise-based tourism villages become increasingly relevant in this context. Social enterprise-based tourism offers a different approach compared to the methods used by the private, government, and non-profit sectors. Enhancing the involvement of non-state actors, including non-governmental organizations, local associations, community groups, and volunteer

organizations, will significantly contribute to transforming social relationships and empowering local communities [2].

Although non-profit organizations focus on the interests of the community, they frequently lack the business expertise needed to develop tourism products that are commercially viable. On the other hand, private sector initiatives usually do not encourage community participation in business activities [3], [4]. Social enterprise is seen as a business model that can integrate and better balance social, economic, and environmental aspects while also providing innovative solutions to address the issues faced by tourism villages today. Hence, this research aims to explore the potential and challenges in the development of social enterprise-based tourism villages, with a specific focus on Desa Cibubuan, Sumedang, as a case study representing the dynamics of tourism village development.

In the context of community-based rural tourism development, social enterprises aim not only to achieve financial profit but also to consider social and environmental aspects in every business decision. Social enterprise is important in community-based rural tourism development and can play a pivotal role in empowering rural tourism villages by offering employment, training, and education, thereby enhancing community well-being; furthermore, by prioritizing cultural sustainability and local wisdom, social enterprise aids in preserving unique traditions and values, maintaining the authenticity and appeal of the tourism village. Innovation is another hallmark of social enterprise, bringing new solutions to social and environmental challenges, driving the creation of novel tourism products and sustainable community programs. The active involvement of the community in decision-making and project implementation fosters understanding and support, crucial for positive and lasting tourism village development. Moreover, social enterprise emphasizes responsible resource management, ensuring sustainable practices such as waste management and renewable energy use for the greater good of the community and environment. The implications of rural community social enterprise development for potential social enterprises for co-production include the need for legitimacy, community engagement in service design, building skills within rural communities, fostering confidence, and developing the necessary capabilities for social enterprise creation. These factors are crucial for enabling rural communities to respond to service delivery challenges through the social enterprise model [5].

This study investigates the potential of social enterprise-based development as a strategic approach to enhancing rural tourism in Desa Cibubuan, Sumedang. By integrating social entrepreneurship principles with rural tourism development, this research aims to identify sustainable strategies that can promote economic growth, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. Through a combination of literature review, field observations, and stakeholder interviews, the study explores how social enterprises can address local challenges and create value for the community. Key findings suggest that social enterprises can effectively mobilize local resources, foster community participation, and ensure long-term sustainability.

Research Questions

1. How do community members perceive and experience their involvement in social enterprise initiatives?
2. What role do social enterprises play in empowering the community and preserving local culture?
3. What challenges and opportunities exist in integrating social entrepreneurship principles with rural tourism development?
4. How do support mechanisms and training programs impact the development and sustainability of social enterprises?

The aims of this research are to provide a comprehensive understanding of the community's experiences, challenges, and opportunities, leading to practical recommendations for sustainable development. The implications of rural community social enterprise development for potential social enterprises for co-production include the need for community engagement in service design, legitimacy, building skills within rural communities, fostering confidence, and developing the necessary capabilities for social enterprise creation. These factors are crucial for enabling rural communities to respond to service delivery challenges through the social enterprise model.

This qualitative research model focuses on gathering in-depth insights and understanding the complex dynamics of social enterprise development and its impact on rural tourism in Desa Cibubuan, Sumedang.

Community Engagement

A more recent definition states that community engagement “means people working collaboratively, through inspired action and learning, to create and realize bold visions for their common future” [6]. Community engagement is a cornerstone in building a strong foundation for rural social enterprise development. Through active participation and collaboration from all layers of society, the aim is to create sustainable innovation and empower the community as a whole.

By engaging in open dialogue and welcoming input from various stakeholders, targeted solutions can be designed to address the social and economic challenges faced by rural communities. From service design to program implementation, community engagement serves as a strong foundation ensuring the sustainability and relevance of every step.

Legitimacy

To date, in Indonesia very few villages have been legalized by the local government as tourism village destinations, including Cibubuan Village. The urgency of legal status is crucial for protecting village assets from external control. Particularly in North Sumedang, there is a wealth of tourism potential that has not yet been collectively managed by village-owned enterprises (Bumdes), making it difficult to develop sustainable tourism destinations.

Moreover, establishing legal status for these entities is of paramount importance. Legal recognition serves as a powerful motivator for the community, instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility. It also provides a protective framework that safeguards village assets from potential external exploitation and control, ensuring that the benefits of tourism development remain within the community.

It is crucial to grasp the resources and capabilities that communities require to establish these social enterprises. These assets and abilities may not be uniformly available across various communities and might necessitate nurturing and backing from local authorities, regional development organizations, and the national government [7]. The legality of forming the tourism-aware community group in Cibubuan Village is established through a decree issued by the local government. The legitimacy of the tourism-aware community institution (Pokdarwis) as the managing body of the tourism village in Cibubuan Village has recently been established, alongside the legitimacy of the Tourism Village itself. This crucial development allows local communities to actively participate in managing and harnessing their tourism potential, fostering both economic growth and social welfare at the local level.

However, there are challenges in proposing the legality of Pokdarwis to the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports. The process involves revising the Pokdarwis decree due to changes in the regional regulations of Sumedang Regency concerning the guidelines for tourism-aware groups and tourism village management. The newly formed Pokdarwis group in Cibubuan Village must comply with these regulations, but its members currently have limited knowledge and experience in bureaucracy.

The formation of Pokdarwis, Cibubuan Village and the formal recognition of the Tourism Village are pivotal steps in empowering local residents. These structures provide a platform for community members to engage in decision-making processes, ensuring that the development and management of tourism resources are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the community. The direct involvement of locals not only enhances the sustainability of tourism initiatives but also ensures that the economic benefits are distributed more equitably within the community.

Entrepreneurial Skills Development

Skill building is a crucial element in the development and sustainability of social enterprises, especially in rural communities. Empowering individuals with the necessary skills not only enhances their personal capabilities but also contributes to the overall strength and resilience of the community. Through comprehensive training programs, workshops, and hands-on learning opportunities, the aim is to equip community members with a diverse set of skills. These range from entrepreneurial and managerial skills to technical and vocational abilities, tailored to the unique needs and potentials of the community

One of the key strategies for establishing tourism as a leading and sustainable sector is by optimizing local resources and developing tourism potential collectively, including the involvement of local communities. This approach ensures that tourism development brings significant economic, social, and cultural benefits to the local population. In

Sumedang Regency, particularly in Cibubuan Village, the development of community-initiated tourism by the productive age group is underway.

Tourism development in Cibubuan Village must be community-based, as tourism activities directly engage the local population. The planning and management of tourism should optimize local resources and develop tourism potential collectively, ensuring local community involvement. Therefore, it is essential to provide support and enhance the capacity of tourism human resources in Cibubuan Village through various initiatives.

Several initiatives have been undertaken in Cibubuan Village to enhance entrepreneurial skills, particularly in the tourism sector. These efforts include enhancing knowledge about community-based tourism, ensuring that local residents understand how to manage and benefit from tourism activities effectively. Conducting internal-external mapping has been crucial for identifying and understanding local resources, as well as creating a calendar of cultural and tourism activities to streamline planning. Skill enhancement workshops have been provided to improve the quality of human resources by offering training on tourism and guiding and delivering excellent service, including cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (CHSE). Efforts to enhance tourism management skills have aimed at improving the ability to manage community-based tourism effectively. Additionally, upgrading the skills and knowledge of local residents has been a priority, training them to become proficient tourism guides. Lastly, elevating the quality of human resources has been essential in ensuring that tourism activities meet high standards of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability. These efforts collectively aim to develop a robust and sustainable tourism sector in Cibubuan Village, leveraging local strengths, engaging the community, and enhancing the overall quality of life for its residents.

By focusing on these capacity-building initiatives, Cibubuan Village aims to develop a robust and sustainable tourism sector that leverages local strengths, engages the community, and enhances the overall quality of life for its residents. Entrepreneurial skills development is crucial for the success and sustainability of village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) in driving economic growth in rural areas. BUMDes, established by the government, play a vital role in enhancing the local economy by leveraging the natural and human resources of the village.

The primary goal of BUMDes is to empower villagers who primarily work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, and livestock, to increase their productivity and improve their livelihoods. By doing so, BUMDes contribute to the overall national goal of enhancing living standards and welfare across Indonesia. The government and various stakeholders must continuously support and stimulate village economic activities to boost productivity through effective utilization of natural and human resources.

BUMDes Kertaraharja Cibubuan, the village enterprise of Cibubuan Village, Sumdang, West Java, was established under Cibubuan Village Regulation No. 18 of 2022 concerning the Establishment, Management, and Administration of Village-Owned

Enterprises (BUMDESA) Cibubuan. Since its inception a year ago, BUMDes Kertaraharja requires ongoing assistance in its management. Support from higher education institutions is particularly crucial in strengthening the organization, addressing challenges, and optimizing resources to enhance village income and improve the welfare of the community.

BUMDes serve as a community and government-managed enterprise established to strengthen the village economy based on the unique needs and potential of each village. The existence of BUMDes is essential for channeling community initiatives to develop local potential, manage and utilize village natural resources, optimize human resources (village residents) in its management, and include capital investment from the village government in the form of financing and assets managed by BUMDes. Through developing village potential and active community participation in managing BUMDes, the village economy can be boosted, leading to economic independence.

However, several factors can hinder the development and growth of BUMDes:

- **Lack of Administrator Knowledge:** Insufficient understanding of leadership, managerial skills, and governance due to limited experience in entrepreneurship hampers the effective management of business organizations.
- **Limited Business Relationships and Units:** The absence of established agreements and business units restricts BUMDes' operational scope and growth.
- **Weak Local Emancipation Spirit:** A lack of intrinsic motivation and local empowerment affects the drive for entrepreneurial initiatives.
- **Weak Village Traditions:** Insufficient solidarity, cooperation, and community spirit undermine collective efforts.
- **Lack of Support from Higher Authorities:** Inadequate support from supra-village levels poses additional challenges.

Despite these challenges, the development of villages is driven by their inherent economic and environmental potentials. Community and government support are pivotal for village advancement. Conversely, internal conflicts between community members and village authorities can impede progress and result in failed development programs.

Integration of Social Entrepreneurship Principles (ISEP)

Integrating Social Entrepreneurship Principles (ISEP) into tourism development is a strategic approach that enhances community strengths and promotes sustainable economic growth, especially in rural areas. ISEP involves active community participation in tourism planning and management, ensuring that development aligns with local needs and values, fostering social inclusivity and sustainability.

This approach builds legitimacy and trust within the community, essential for gaining support and participation in tourism enterprises. Training programs and workshops under ISEP enhance local residents' entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to manage

and operate tourism businesses effectively. These businesses adopt sustainable models that prioritize social and environmental benefits alongside economic gains.

ISEP also leverages local resources, creating unique tourism experiences that preserve cultural heritage and natural attractions. By distributing economic benefits equitably among community members, ISEP reduces poverty and improves living standards, reinvesting tourism revenues into community projects. Moreover, tourism enterprises guided by social entrepreneurship principles are more resilient and adaptable to challenges. ISEP fosters community engagement, builds trust, develops skills, promotes sustainability, optimizes resources, empowers economically, and enhances resilience, contributing to successful and sustainable tourism development in rural areas like Cibubuan Village.

Conclusion

Community members in Cibubuan village perceive their involvement in social enterprise initiatives as transformative and empowering. They experience firsthand the positive impact of social enterprises on job creation, skill development, and sustainable practices, leading to improved well-being and a stronger sense of community ownership in driving local development. Social enterprises in Cibubuan village play a crucial role in empowering the community and preserving its rich local culture. They provide meaningful employment opportunities, support skill-building programs, and promote eco-friendly practices, all while actively engaging in preserving traditional customs and heritage. This dual focus ensures that the community thrives economically while safeguarding its unique identity and cultural assets.

The integration of social entrepreneurship principles with rural tourism development in Cibubuan village presents a blend of challenges and opportunities. Challenges include resource constraints, limited awareness about social entrepreneurship, and regulatory complexities. However, these challenges also pave the way for innovative solutions, collaborative partnerships, and community-driven initiatives that can address social, economic, and environmental issues holistically.

Support mechanisms and training programs in Cibubuan village significantly impact the development and sustainability of social enterprises. These initiatives provide essential resources, mentorship, and capacity-building opportunities for local entrepreneurs, empowering them to establish and manage successful enterprises. Ongoing support fosters resilience and ensures that social enterprises continue to thrive, making a lasting positive impact on the community's economic and social well-being.

The community has actively participated in the development of tourism-based social enterprises, leveraging the village's natural and cultural resources. Training programs and capacity-building initiatives have empowered local residents to manage tourism enterprises effectively, leading to increased economic opportunities and improved social welfare. Through ISEP, Desa Cibubuan has seen the establishment of legitimate and community-driven social enterprises that address local challenges while promoting sustainable tourism development. This model demonstrates the potential of integrating social entrepreneurship principles to create impactful and resilient community-led enterprises.

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Disclosure of Interests.

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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