

DEVELOPMENT OF AGROTOURISM BASED ON LOCAL WISDOM IN BALI COUNTRYSIDE SIDEMEN AS AN EFFORT TOWARD SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The Bali Countryside Sidemen area holds great potential to be developed as an agrotourism destination that combines the charm of rural landscapes, traditional farming practices, and the local wisdom of the community. Located in Sukahet Village, Sidemen District, Karangasem Regency, this area has the opportunity to become a model of sustainable agricultural tourism that supports food security, environmental education, and economic empowerment of local residents. However, the development of this destination still faces several challenges, such as limited promotion, inadequate tourism infrastructure, underdeveloped attractions, and poor accessibility. This study aims to formulate a development strategy for community-based agrotourism. A qualitative approach was used, involving interviews with five key informants consisting of tourism actors and local farmers, supported by documentation and direct field observation. The analysis was based on four key tourism elements (4A): attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services, with a focus on the agricultural context. The results show that strengthening promotion, creating educational attractions such as planting and harvesting activities, processing local agricultural products, and providing environmentally friendly accommodations rooted in farming culture are strategic steps to unlock the area's potential. The main recommendation of this study is the collaboration between farmers, tourism entrepreneurs, and village government to establish an inclusive and sustainable agrotourism system.

Keywords: Agrotourism, Sustainable Agriculture, 4A Strategy, Village Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector has long been recognized as a key driver of economic development, particularly in developing countries endowed with abundant natural and cultural resources (UNWTO, 2022). Beyond contributing to national and regional revenues, tourism plays a vital role in generating employment, stimulating micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and expanding cross-sector investment opportunities (Hernández-Mogollón et al., 2021). In Indonesia, especially in Bali the economy is highly reliant on tourism, positioning the sector as a top priority in both medium- and long-term development planning (BPS Bali, 2024). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the recovery of the tourism sector has shown positive trends. Data from BPS Bali (2024) records that international tourist arrivals to Bali from January to September 2024 reached 4,749,449 visitors, exceeding pre-pandemic figures. This surge in arrivals has led to increased employment and investment, particularly in subsectors such as hotels, restaurants, and supporting services. Business loans to the tourism sector even reached IDR 93.59 trillion as of July 2024, reflecting the dominant role of tourism

in Bali's economic structure (Bank Indonesia, 2024). A key post-pandemic strategy in tourism development is the integration of sustainability principles, encompassing environmental, social, and economic aspects (Gössling & Hall, 2021). Agritourism, which merges agricultural and tourism activities, is regarded as an innovative solution to address the uneven development of tourism, often concentrated in coastal and urban areas (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). Agritourism also empowers local communities to participate actively as both economic agents and custodians of cultural values that serve as key attractions (Lane, 2009).

Bali Countryside Sidemen, located in Karangasem Regency, exemplifies a region with high agritourism potential that has yet to be fully optimized. Its beautiful natural landscape, traditional farming systems such as *subak*, and rich cultural heritage make the area highly suitable for development as a local wisdom-based agritourism destination (Wiranata & Purnomo, 2022). However, previous observations and findings identify several challenges, including limited digital promotion, insufficient tourism-standard facilities, low human

resource capacity, and the absence of institutional collaboration among community members, private actors, and the government (Sugihartini et al., 2021). Under the paradigm of sustainable tourism, each destination must be developed as part of an interactive system involving social, economic, cultural, and political components (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005). Thus, developing a destination like Sidemen cannot rely on a single actor. It requires synergy among three core pillars: the community, as the cultural and land owners; the private sector, as business actors and investors; and the government, as the provider of enabling policies, infrastructure, and regulatory support (Murphy, 1985; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). Nevertheless, prior studies reveal that local

communities are often treated merely as passive objects in tourism development and are excluded from meaningful decision-making and equitable benefit distribution (Tosun, 2006). This disparity fosters social resistance and undermines the effectiveness of tourism programs in improving local welfare. Therefore, a participatory approach is essential in developing an agritourism model that is inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable (Timothy, 2007). This study aims to design a local wisdom-based agritourism development model for Bali Countryside Sidemen. The proposed model is expected to enhance the destination's appeal and competitiveness both locally and globally while strengthening community participation in a just and sustainable tourism system.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at comprehensively portraying the dynamics of local wisdom-based tourism development in the Bali Countryside Sidemen area. This approach was selected for its ability to deeply explore social phenomena and provide a holistic understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and practices of tourism stakeholders within a local context (Creswell, 2014). The focus of the research is directed toward interpreting development strategies that integrate economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions in alignment with sustainable tourism principles. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and field documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with five key informants selected purposively, including three tourists and two tourism managers. These informants were chosen based on their direct involvement in destination activities and their potential to contribute valuable insights regarding service quality, attraction sustainability, and tourism management perceptions. A semi-structured interview technique was used to ensure the research had a guiding framework while remaining flexible enough to explore broader insights as prompted by respondents' answers.

Direct observations were carried out in the field to examine interactions between tourists and local communities, facility usage, attraction implementation, and accessibility conditions to the tourist location. This observational data was vital in identifying the alignment of on-site tourism practices with sustainability standards. In addition, documentation such as photos, videos, and field notes served as visual evidence to complement verbal data. Secondary data were obtained through document and literature reviews, including destination management

reports, village tourism development policies, scholarly journal articles, and regional strategic plans related to sustainable tourism. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and categories related to tourism development components based on the 4A framework (attractions, accessibility, amenities, ancillary services) as developed by Cooper et al. (2008), and sustainability indicators from UNWTO (2019). To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, source and method triangulation techniques were employed. Triangulation involved comparing interview findings with direct observations and relevant written documents to ensure consistency and objectivity in the researcher's interpretation. The analysis process followed a staged approach, starting with data transcription, coding, identifying key themes, and interpreting meaning—based on the principles of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The findings of this research are expected to contribute to the theoretical and practical advancement of community-based sustainable tourism in rural areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Potential of Bali Countryside Sidemen as an Agritourism Destination

Bali Countryside Sidemen, located in Karangasem Regency, East Bali, presents a unique and authentic potential for agritourism based on local wisdom. With its terraced rice fields, clean air, and strong traditional farming culture, the area is well-suited for the development of experiential tourism that blends education, recreation, and cultural preservation (Wiranata & Purnomo, 2022). Tourists visiting the area can actively participate in activities such as plowing fields with oxen, planting rice, and joining workshops on Balinese cooking, *canang* (offerings) crafting, and writing traditional Balinese script on

lontar leaves. These activities make Sidemen not only a recreational destination but also a space for cross-cultural learning and understanding. Unfortunately, this extraordinary potential has yet to be fully optimized. Limited digital promotion, insufficient tourism infrastructure, and weak institutional collaboration remain major barriers to improving the destination's competitiveness. In fact, agritourism can be an effective strategy to diversify Bali's tourism offerings, which have long been concentrated in the southern region (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). With a participatory approach and local capacity building, Sidemen has the potential to become a model for community-based and sustainable destination development in East Bali.

Economic Dimension

From an economic perspective, agritourism plays a significant role in strengthening local economies, particularly in rural areas. The presence of tourists generates demand for local products and services, creates new jobs, and increases family and village income. According to Biantoro (2014), tourism can provide direct impacts such as employment generation and increased economic activity, as well as indirect impacts through multiplier effects that stimulate other sectors like agriculture, trade, and services. However, the economic success of tourism can only be achieved if the benefits are equitably distributed. UNWTO (2005) emphasizes the importance of indicators such as tourism income, community investment, and contributions to poverty alleviation. One major challenge is economic leakage, when much of the profit flows out of the region. Therefore, strengthening local businesses, ensuring transparent management of tourism revenues, and providing entrepreneurship training are key strategies to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008).

Social Dimension

The social aspect of sustainable tourism is closely linked to community empowerment and the preservation of local culture. The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) model positions local communities as owners and managers of the destination, allowing them to directly benefit both economically and socially from tourism activities (Asker et al., 2010). Involving the community early in the planning and management process helps build local capacity, sustain cultural identity, and enhance resilience against external changes. The success of CBT in practice depends on several factors, such as strong community institutions, participatory decision-making mechanisms, and fair benefit distribution (Tosun,

2006). UNWTO (2019) outlines key social indicators for sustainable tourism, including community participation, cultural preservation, gender equality, and protection of vulnerable groups. In the case of Sidemen, strengthening community organizations, promoting local human resource training, and fostering equal partnerships between communities and tourism businesses are strategic steps to generate inclusive and positive social impacts.

Environmental Dimension

The environmental dimension is a critical component of sustainable tourism, especially in relatively untouched areas like Sidemen. Ecotourism and agritourism practices aligned with ecological principles help sustain agricultural landscapes, biodiversity, and environmental quality. Environmentally friendly tourism activities such as tree-planting tours, the use of renewable energy, and community-based waste management provide effective environmental education (Honey, 2008). These practices are essential to maintaining a balance between destination use and preservation. Without wise management, however, tourism can lead to environmental degradation such as land erosion, pollution, and pressure on water resources (Gössling, 2002). Therefore, environmental management strategies based on carrying capacity, environmental audits, and tourism development regulations must be integrated into the destination's master plan. In the context of Sidemen, preserving the rice terrace landscapes and the *Subak* irrigation system is not only a matter of aesthetics but also a vital part of cultural identity that must be safeguarded through protective policies and active community participation.

3.2. Sustainable Tourism Concept in Bali Countryside Sidemen

Tourism development in the Bali Countryside Sidemen area is part of a region-based tourism development strategy in Karangasem Regency. In this context, Sidemen is identified as a key area with distinctive potential to offer a differentiated destination grounded in natural landscapes and local culture. The main goal of this development is aligned with the realization of sustainable tourism principles, a holistic approach that balances economic growth, environmental preservation, and the social well-being of local communities (UNWTO, 2005; UNEP, 2011). The success of developing this area is also intended to enhance the quality of tourist experiences, maintain environmental sustainability, and generate employment opportunities for local communities (Gössling & Hall, 2021).



Figure 1. Weaving Process



Figure 2. Philosophy of Traditional Balinese House



Figure 3. Trekking through Sidemen Village



Figure 4. Education on Subak and Traditional Plowing with Oxen



Figure 5. Learning the Traditional Arak-Making Process Figure



6. Education on the Ngaben Cremation Ceremony



Figure 7. Writing in Balinese Script Figure Leaves



8. Making Canang Sari Offerings Using Lontar

To gain empirical insights into the development direction of Bali Countryside Sidemen, interviews were conducted with five informants, consisting of three tourists and two destination managers. The results indicate that building a competitive and sustainable destination must begin with strengthening the core elements of tourism destinations, known as the 4A concept: Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities, and Ancillary Services (Cooper et al., 2008; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). These components form the foundation for improving both the competitiveness and quality of the destination.

- a. Attraction (Tourist Attractions) are the primary reasons tourists choose to visit a destination. In Sidemen, the appeal lies not only in its stunning natural landscapes but also in its rich cultural heritage and preserved agrarian practices. Visitors can participate in educational activities such as traditional weaving, learning about Balinese traditional house architecture, understanding the *banjar* social structure, observing traditional *arak* distillation, and studying the UNESCO-recognized *Subak* irrigation system (Wiranata & Purnomo, 2022). Other activities include plowing rice fields with oxen, cooking local dishes, making *canang* offerings, and writing Balinese script on *lontar* leaves. These experiences highlight authenticity, direct interaction with locals, and the embodiment of local wisdom, ideally suited to the principles of experiential tourism (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015).
- b. Accessibility determines how easily tourists can reach a destination. Bali Countryside Sidemen is reachable by private vehicle or tourist bus, but the condition of access roads still requires significant improvement from local authorities. Poor or damaged infrastructure can reduce comfort and safety, as well as negatively affect visitors' perceptions of the destination's quality (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). Therefore, enhancing both physical and digital access such as road signage, pedestrian pathways, and internet connectivity should be a top priority in tourism development strategies.
- c. Amenities play a vital role in improving comfort and service quality for tourists. Currently, basic facilities in Sidemen include parking areas, clean public toilets, seating areas, bamboo learning huts, community kitchens, gazebos, temples (*pura*), and small shops. These support the visitor experience but still require both

quantitative and qualitative enhancement. Adequate facilities are also closely linked to destination competitiveness, especially in attracting international tourists who value comfort and safety (UNWTO, 2019).

- d. Ancillary, supporting services and institutions such as ATMs, tourist information centers, money changers, emergency healthcare, and safety management are not yet fully available in the area. This highlights an urgent need to strengthen tourism institutional frameworks, including planning, risk management, and information services (Murphy, 1985). In the long term, a strong and inclusive village tourism institution can foster an independent, adaptive, and professional destination capable of addressing visitor needs and industry challenges.

Implementing the 4A concept in the development of Bali Countryside Sidemen is a strategic step toward achieving sustainable tourism goals. When supported by active community participation, cross-sector collaboration, and favorable local policies, this region has strong potential to become a highly competitive and eco-friendly agritourism model in Bali.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of the Bali Countryside Sidemen agritourism destination requires a comprehensive, context-based strategic approach. This strategy should not only focus on enhancing destination promotion through digital media and partnership networks, but also emphasize the improvement of physical facilities, the expansion of tourism service elements, and the provision of authentic and comfortable experiences for visitors. These efforts aim to create added value for the destination while supporting the core principles of sustainable tourism. The sustainability of the tourism destination is inseparable from the area's capacity to adopt eco-friendly technologies and integrate local innovations. The implementation of technologies such as alternative energy usage, sustainable waste management, and green architectural design in tourism infrastructure is crucial for environmental preservation and for strengthening the destination's image as an ecologically conscious tourism area.

Furthermore, it is essential to establish participatory mechanisms that actively involve all stakeholders in the planning and execution of development programs. To ensure sustainable progress, a regular monitoring and evaluation system based on measurable performance indicators must be implemented. Ongoing evaluation serves as a tool to

assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and provides a foundation for adjusting policies and interventions in areas needing reinforcement. As a key recommendation, this study proposes the development of eco-lodge accommodations in the vicinity of Bali Countryside Sidemen. This type of lodging not only addresses accessibility challenges due to the destination's distance from urban centers but also

complements the main attraction of rural and agricultural landscapes. Accommodation design that aligns with local natural aesthetics and sustainability principles is projected to enhance the destination's image as a space for both recreation and cultural reflection, while also encouraging longer stays and higher tourist expenditures.

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