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## Developing Nature and Culture-Based Tourism in Kedung Murung Village: Community Empowerment Approaches

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### **Abstrak**

Kedang Murung Village has strategic potential to develop nature and culture-based tourism, with Tanjung Sarai Lake as the main attraction. The uniqueness of nature, local wisdom, and rich traditions are essential to forming an authentic tourist destination identity. Active community involvement supported by high social solidarity shows the community's readiness to support sustainable tourism initiatives. As a result, there is a real contribution to increasing community income and local economic growth. However, tourism development faces several obstacles, such as limited supporting infrastructure, minimal budget, and low managerial capacity of the community in managing tourism businesses. This study recommends strengthening synergy between the village government, the private sector, and local communities through a collaborative approach to planning and implementing tourism programs. Information technology, especially digital media, is essential to increase promotion effectiveness and market reach. In addition, training and mentoring for the community in managing small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) need to be intensified to increase entrepreneurial capacity and strengthen the competitiveness of the village as a tourist destination. These efforts are expected to enhance the local economy and support environmental conservation and sustainable cultural preservation.

*Keywords: Community empowerment, Tanjung Serai Lake, Tourism Development, Tourism Village*

### **1. Introduction**

The description of the potential of Kedang Murung Village, which has a lake, natural wealth, and culture, is in line with the research of (1), which shows that the uniqueness of natural resources and culture is the main capital in developing tourist villages. According to the study, villages with natural characteristics such as lakes, rivers, and forests have great potential to become sustainable tourist destinations. Kedang Murung Village is located in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan, with a strategic position on the banks of the Mahakam River. Kedang Murung Village administratively has three hamlets, namely Kedang Murung, Rimba Ayu, and Rajak, and has 12 RTs. This village is unique in the form of Tanjung Sarai Lake, which offers a stunning natural panorama with a spectacular sunset view in the middle of the lake. (2) also emphasized that managing natural tourism assets such as lakes requires an integrated approach by involving local communities as the leading managers, which is seen by the conditions of Kedang Murung Village.

The village reaches 10,198.93 hectares with abundant natural resources in the form of lakes, swamps, and stretches of green forests that are still preserved. In addition to Lake Tanjung Sarai, this village also has extensive agricultural and plantation potential, with dry land reaching 470 hectares and plantations of around 500 hectares that are used for rubber and oil palm cultivation. The cultural wealth of Kedang Murung Village is reflected in the tradition of community cooperation, traditional dance arts, and customs that are still preserved from generation to generation, as seen in the historical story of Burit Ayus and the origin of the village name, which is full of meaning. As an iconic tourist attraction in Kedang Murung Village, Lake Tanjung Sarai has excellent potential to improve the local economy. Lake Tanjung Sarai tourism positively responds to the surrounding community's economy, especially for business actors who benefit from visiting tourists. Tourist attractions that offer natural beauty and authentic local culture are the center of attention in regional tourism development. This can make Lake Tanjung Sarai a leading tourist destination for tourists from all over. This is necessary for sustainable development so that tourist attractions in Kota Bangun can continue to operate and carve out a name as a tourism icon in East Kalimantan.

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In developing a tourist village, its management will undoubtedly have several problems. The main problem is budget shrinkage, where budget funds are essential in improving facilities and lake maintenance. (3) added that managing a village tourism budget requires a transparent and accountable financial management system to ensure long-term operational sustainability. Tanjung Sarai Lake requires routine maintenance, such as cleaning up garbage and water quality and maintaining tourist facilities, so with a limited budget, tourism management will be hampered. The development of Kedang Murung Village as a tourist destination is highly urgent in order to encourage an increase in the local community's economy. The urgency of developing a tourist village to improve the community's economy is in line with research by (4), which proves that the development of a tourist village provides a multiplier effect on community income of up to 1.5-2 times through the creation of new jobs and business diversification.

With well-managed tourism activities, the community can obtain additional income sources through tour guide services, sales of handicraft products, local cuisine, and management of accommodation and transportation. This will have a direct impact on improving the standard of living and welfare of the village community. (5) also underlined the importance of a community-based tourism development approach that improves economic welfare and strengthens local cultural identity, as expected in the development of Kedang Murung Village. In addition to the economic aspect, sustainable tourism development also plays an important role in preserving local culture and the environment. Making local cultures, such as traditional dance, woven crafts, and typical cuisine, as tourist attractions, these traditions and cultural values will continue to be preserved and passed on to the younger generation (6). Likewise, with ecotourism, the natural beauty of Tanjung Sarai Lake and its surrounding ecosystem can be maintained because the community will increasingly realize the importance of protecting the environment as a valuable tourism asset.

### **Implementation Method**

**Data Collection Techniques** Data collection was done using several comprehensive methods to obtain accurate and thorough information. In-depth interviews with stakeholders, including local communities and village heads, were conducted to understand social and cultural conditions and community expectations regarding tourism development. Field observations were also carried out systematically to observe and assess natural conditions, available infrastructure, and tourism activities in Kedang Murung Village. Documentation was carried out comprehensively, covering community activities and existing tourism potential, both through photos, videos, and written notes to identify assets and opportunities that can be developed.

The approach used in developing Kedang Murung Village tourism emphasizes active participation and community empowerment. Community training and mentoring are carried out periodically with materials on tourism destination management, tourist services, and effective tourism marketing strategies. Socialization programs are also held to increase community awareness of the importance of their participation in village tourism development, including the economic, social, and cultural benefits that can be obtained. To develop local tourism products, practical demonstrations are carried out to the community on the manufacture and development of tourism products such as typical woven handicrafts, skewer crafts, and traditional food processing such as sampling, peek, and just pij (salted fish), which are the village's leading culinary delights. This approach is designed to ensure that the development of Kedang Murung Village tourism runs sustainably and provides direct benefits to the local community.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

### **Analysis of Village Community Characteristics**

The characteristics of rural and urban communities generally have differences. These characteristics are influenced by geographical, social, cultural, and economic factors that shape rural communities' life patterns. According to (7), the characteristics of rural communities are formed through a long interaction process with the physical and social environment, resulting in a distinctive adaptation pattern that is different from urban communities. The people of Kedang Murung Village have strong familial social relationships. The social solidarity of residents is channeled through cooperation activities and citizen participation in village events. The strength of social capital in rural Indonesia lies in the high solidarity and trust between residents and familial social networks (8).

In contrast to rural communities, urban communities have a high sense of individualism, so they have low social solidarity compared to rural communities. The phenomenon of individualization in urban areas is the impact of modernization and changes in the structure of society due to industrialization (9). Rural communities still hold fast to traditional values, customs, and local culture. Local wisdom, ranging from typical woven handicrafts, skewer crafts, and superior village foods, attracts tourists from outside the village, so they must be preserved.

Local wisdom is a strategic asset in developing a culture-based creative economy in villages that can encourage the community's economic independence (10).

Meanwhile, culture is more heterogeneous in urban areas due to the influence of several ethnic groups, religions, and cultures, and faster social change due to globalization and modernization. According to (11), cultural heterogeneity in urban areas results from migration and social transformation that creates spaces for multicultural interaction. The mobility level of Kedang Murung village residents is relatively high due to good infrastructure, adequate transportation, and access to public facilities (sub-health centers, schools) located within the village that are easy to visit.

This is the same as urban communities with high mobility without limited access to public facilities due to road infrastructure, facilities, and vehicles. Most rural communities depend on existing natural resources. Most livelihoods in Kedang Murung are fisheries, agriculture, and plantations. The mindset of the Kedang Murung village community tends to be open and adaptive to technological developments. There is one hamlet where residents are still more closed regarding technology or modernization. Urban areas certainly have a modern mindset and are open to technological innovation; what distinguishes them from rural areas is their competitive, dynamic, and hasty attitude (12).

## Tourism Development Potential and Models

Kedang Murung Village, as a tourism village, has succeeded in developing its natural and cultural potential into an attractive tourism destination. The attraction of this village is Tanjung Sarai Lake, a natural lake surrounded by green, lush forests with stunning beauty. According to (13), a natural lake surrounded by a well-maintained forest ecosystem can be a sustainable tourist magnet and attract nature-loving tourists. Tourists can enjoy the calm lake view, boating, or relaxing on the lake's edge. Tourists can enjoy the calm lake view, boating, or relaxing on the lake's edge. Kedang Murung Village is also abundant in agriculture and oil palm plantations and has excellent potential as a prosperous and sustainable village. The following is documentation of potential locations.



Figure 1. Potential locations

Villages with well-managed agricultural and plantation potential can be a model for sustainable independent village development (14). The abundance of resources in the farming and palm oil plantation sectors can develop small and medium industries (SMEs) through handicrafts, small-scale palm oil processing, and organic fertilizer production. The development of local SMEs can increase residents' income, which can improve the local economy. Kedang Murung also offers local cultural educational tourism and environmental conservation efforts. Educational tourism based on local wisdom strategically preserves culture while providing authentic tourist experiences (5). To develop tourism, this village can provide education related to local wisdom in managing natural resources, such as forests and lakes, as well as participating in workshops on Kedang Murung's typical woven handicrafts. Active participation from the village community is needed in village and tourism development. Community participation is the key to success in developing sustainable community-based tourism (15).

The Kedang Murung village community also supported the development of Tanjung Sarai Lake tourism and felt its positive impacts. This is in line with the research of (16), which states that the involvement of local communities in tourism development not only improves economic welfare but also strengthens local cultural identity. Mr. Junaidi, as the local Village Head, noted that the village community was involved in organizing tourism events, one of which was the tinting racing event at Tanjung Sarai Lake tourism. Implementing this event

opens up economic opportunities for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (17). Tourism events based on local wisdom can catalyze local economic growth and create a multiplier effect for the surrounding community (18). The local government also provides facilities for village communities to sell at tourist locations. The existence of micro-businesses in tourist areas is an effective form of community economic empowerment to increase household income. Villages as centers for tourism development have great potential to become drivers of the people's economy if they are appropriately managed (19).

Government support was given to the development of Tanjung Sarai Lake, namely, with the inauguration of Tanjung Sarai Lake tourism in Kota Bangun District by the Regent of Kutai Kartanegara, Mr. Edi Damansyah. This tourist attraction has become a concern for the local government with the support of road infrastructure development through APBD funds. According to (20), the synergy between regional and village governments in developing tourist destinations can accelerate the growth of supporting infrastructure needed to improve accessibility and the quality of the tourist experience. The village government is committed to supporting the activities of Bumdes Karya Usaha Mandiri Kedang Murung Village in developing tourism, which will be managed by Bumdes and Pokdarwis (Nirwana Desa Kedang Murung). The tourism office also fully supports Tanjung Sarai Lake tourism with various promotional strategies through websites, YouTube, and social media to increase the number of tourist visits. (21) emphasized that digital marketing strategies in promoting village tourist destinations have proven effective in reaching a broader market and increasing awareness of potential tourists, especially in the digital era like today.

### **Implementation of Innovation in Tourism Development**

Kedang Murung Village has its application in terms of tourism development; one of the famous tourist attractions in Kedang Murung Village is Tanjung Sarai Lake, which is located not far from the local village area; after interviewing with the head of Kedang Murung Village, Mr. Junaidi, he said that the development of innovation and tourism continues to be improved to introduce the local area and its tourist attractions to all corners of Indonesia and even the world. This aligns with research by (1), which emphasizes the importance of local leaders' integrating local wisdom values into the strategy for developing tourist villages. Mr. Junaidi said that the tourist attractions in Kedang Murung Village will be promoted through certain events scheduled at the tourist attractions themselves. The Village Government (Pemdes) of Kedang Murung, Kota Bangun District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency (Kukar) continues to strive to develop their mainstay tourism. Namely Tanjung Sarai Lake as a leading sector. The existence of the Tanjung Sarai Lake tourist attraction has succeeded in bringing economic growth to the surrounding community.

Kedang Murung Village often holds racing competitions to attract more tourists every year. The village government also collaborates with companies manufacturing engines to make the event successful. (1) recommend collaboration between the village government, the private sector, and the community as the key to sustainable tourism development. Through this event, it is hoped that the younger generation can be more empowered to manage local businesses while utilizing event-based promotional media to increase the popularity of the destination. This approach is also supported by (22), who suggests using unique culture-based activities as a marketing tool to differentiate tourist destinations in the global market. With events like this, it is hoped that the surrounding community, especially young people, can be more empowered in managing MSME businesses. (22), in the context of lake destination development, states that nature-based tourist attractions such as lakes increase income and open up opportunities for active community participation in MSME management.

### **Challenges and Solutions**

The challenges faced in tourism development are budget limitations in developing Tanjung Sarai village tourism. The village budget obtained has decreased, and budget limitations also affect other facilities such as health sports venues, as expressed by (23) in a case study of Montongsari Village, Kendal Regency, where budget limitations also hamper community participation and the development of basic infrastructure. The solution to this problem is that the village head said he continues to support efforts to develop tourism, health facilities, and sports through collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities, as well as the use of digital media for marketing based on cultural stories or natural uniqueness. This approach is in line with the findings of (23), which states that synergy between stakeholders can compensate for limited funds while increasing community participation in village development. Promotion is carried out by holding events around the Tanjung Sarai tourist attraction to increase interest in the Tanjung Sarai tourist attraction and increase the popularity of the Kedang Murung village tourist attraction. Tanjung Sarai tourist attraction To increase the popularity of the Kedang Murung

village tourist attraction, promotion is also carried out on digital social media such as YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook.

#### 4. Conclusion

Kedang Murung Village shows great potential in developing nature and culture-based tourism, primarily through Tanjung Sarai Lake. The village community has high social solidarity and active involvement in tourism development, which contributes to improving the local economy. However, budget and infrastructure limitations still need to be overcome. As a follow-up, it can be recommended that the village government continue to collaborate with the private sector and local communities in tourism development and utilize digital media for more effective promotion. In addition, training needs to be held to improve community skills in managing small and medium enterprises to strengthen tourist destinations' competitiveness and improve community welfare.

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