

Exploring Local Wisdom via Community-Based Tourism for Sustainable Tourism Development in Cigugur, Kuningan, Indonesia

Darto¹, Savitri Aditiany², Rita Myrna³, Nabila Kamila⁴

Abstract

Tourism plays a crucial role in Indonesia's economy, contributing significantly to income generation, employment, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is an effective model that involves local communities in managing tourism, ensuring that its economic benefits are directly experienced by residents. Local wisdom, which refers to traditional knowledge passed down through generations, is vital for fostering sustainable tourism by offering unique cultural and natural attractions. The Cigugur Subdistrict in Kuningan Regency Indonesia, rich in cultural and natural resources, faces challenges in fully optimizing its tourism potential. This study examines the role of local wisdom in tourism development through CBT in Cigugur Village. Qualitative research methods, including observations, interviews, and literature reviews, were used to investigate how local wisdom can be incorporated into CBT to promote inclusive tourism development. The results emphasize the importance of community participation, sustainable management practices, and collaborative partnerships to ensure the success of tourism in Cigugur. This approach can serve as a model for achieving a balance between cultural preservation and economic growth through community-based tourism.

Keywords: *Community-Based Tourism, Local Wisdom, Sustainable Tourism, Cultural Preservation, Inclusive Development.*

Introduction

Tourism has evolved into a pivotal driver of global economic growth, contributing significantly to community development, job creation, and the preservation of cultural heritage. However, the expansion of mass tourism has brought challenges, including environmental degradation, the marginalization of local cultures, and concerns about sustainability. To address these challenges, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as an alternative model, emphasizing the involvement of local communities in managing and developing tourism activities. By empowering residents to participate actively, CBT ensures that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed while safeguarding cultural and environmental assets (Hoppers, 2002).

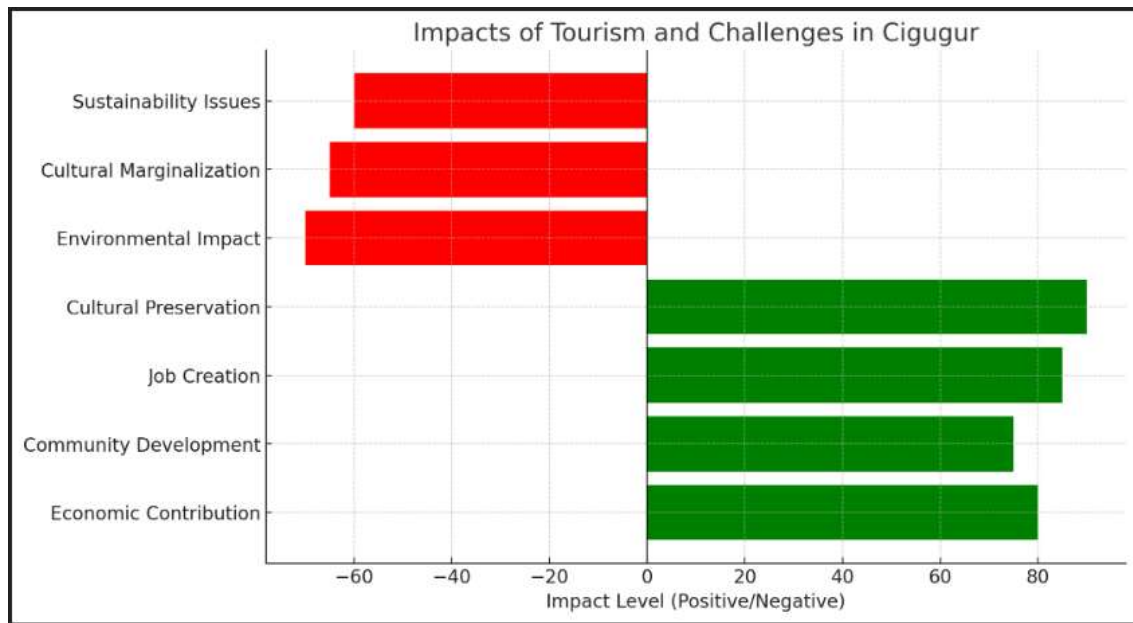
This study investigates the application of CBT in Cigugur, Kuningan, Indonesia, a region renowned for its cultural richness and natural beauty. Despite its considerable potential as a tourist destination, Cigugur faces challenges in optimizing its resources and integrating local wisdom into tourism development. Local wisdom, defined as traditional knowledge and practices passed down through generations, is essential for creating distinctive and sustainable tourism experiences. By harnessing this cultural heritage through CBT, Cigugur has the opportunity to strengthen its tourism sector while ensuring inclusivity and sustainability for its residents (Kuningan, 2024).

¹ Padjadjaran University

² Padjadjaran University.

³ Padjadjaran University.

⁴ Padjadjaran University

Figure 1. Impacts of Tourism and Challenges in Cigugur

Source: processed by author, 2024

The research focuses on how local wisdom can be effectively integrated into Cigugur's tourism development through CBT. Key areas of exploration include community involvement, sustainable management practices, and collaborative partnerships among local stakeholders. The study argues that embedding local wisdom within tourism strategies fosters cultural preservation while driving long-term economic growth. Moreover, the research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of CBT implementation in Cigugur, offering practical insights and strategies for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in sustainable tourism development.

The methodology includes a review of academic literature on CBT and local wisdom, complemented by qualitative methods such as interviews and observations. Findings will highlight actionable recommendations for policymakers and community leaders to ensure that Cigugur's tourism development remains inclusive, culturally sensitive, and economically beneficial. This research aspires to illustrate the transformative potential of CBT in promoting sustainable tourism and preserving the unique cultural heritage of Cigugur.

Literature Review

Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Tourism is widely recognized as a crucial component of economic development, particularly in developing nations where it generates significant revenue and employment opportunities. However, the conventional approach to tourism often results in environmental degradation, social displacement, and the commodification of local cultures. In response to these issues, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a sustainable alternative, emphasizing local participation and the preservation of cultural heritage. This section will review the academic literature on CBT, local wisdom, and sustainable tourism development, highlighting the theoretical paradigms that inform this research. CBT is a tourism model that seeks to promote sustainable development by involving local communities in the planning, management, and benefits of tourism activities. (Rocharungsat, 2008a). defined CBT as a form of tourism that empowers local communities to participate in and benefit from tourism development while promoting environmental and cultural conservation. CBT has been successfully implemented in various regions worldwide, demonstrating its potential to provide economic, social, and environmental benefits. (Goodwin, H., &

Santilli, 2009) further emphasized that CBT allows local communities to retain control over tourism resources, ensuring that economic gains are reinvested locally. (Giampiccoli, A., & Kalis, 2012) highlighted the importance of ownership and decision-making power in CBT, arguing that tourism initiatives should be driven by local needs and aspirations rather than external investors or governments. CBT not only enhances local empowerment but also fosters cultural exchange between visitors and host communities, promoting mutual understanding and respect. However, (Asker, S., 2010) cautioned that CBT's success depends on effective management, capacity building, and community cohesion, as poorly managed projects may lead to community conflict or exploitation.

Local wisdom refers to traditional knowledge and practices that have been passed down through generations, often shaped by the environment and culture of a community. This concept plays a pivotal role in sustainable tourism, particularly in regions rich in cultural heritage. (Butler, 1999) introduced the notion of local knowledge, emphasizing its role in shaping societal behaviors and norms. Local wisdom is often intertwined with the natural environment, guiding communities in managing resources sustainably and fostering resilience against external pressures. In the context of tourism, local wisdom provides a foundation for creating unique and authentic experiences that attract visitors. (Wahyuningtiyas, W., & Tukiman, 2016) discussed how local wisdom contributes to the development of cultural tourism by offering visitors an opportunity to engage with the intangible heritage of a region. (Braun, V., & Clarke, 2006) argued that integrating local wisdom into tourism products helps preserve cultural identity and supports the long-term sustainability of tourism destinations. In the specific case of Indonesia, (Aref, 2011) noted that local wisdom plays an essential role in shaping the interaction between tourism and culture. Indonesian communities, particularly in rural areas, have a wealth of traditional knowledge that can be harnessed to develop sustainable tourism practices. For example, (Ashley, C., & Roe, 2001) explored the role of local wisdom in Bali's tourism industry, highlighting how traditional customs and practices have been preserved through tourism, contributing to both cultural and economic sustainability.

Sustainable tourism aims to balance the economic benefits of tourism with the preservation of environmental and cultural resources. Butler (1999) introduced the concept of the tourism lifecycle, which demonstrates how destinations can experience overdevelopment, leading to environmental and social degradation. In response, sustainable tourism practices, including CBT, have sought to mitigate these impacts by promoting responsible tourism practices that prioritize long-term well-being over short-term gains. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as tourism that considers its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and host communities (UNWTO, 2013). Hall (2010) emphasized that sustainable tourism should focus on minimizing negative impacts while maximizing positive contributions, such as improving local livelihoods and conserving cultural heritage. However, achieving this balance remains a challenge, particularly in regions where tourism development is driven by external interests rather than local communities. Muganda, Sirima, and Ezra (2013) identified several challenges associated with sustainable tourism, including the unequal distribution of benefits, lack of community participation, and limited capacity for local management. These challenges are particularly relevant in developing countries, where tourism development is often top-down, with limited opportunities for local communities to influence decision-making processes. In such contexts, CBT offers a potential solution by placing local communities at the center of tourism development (Pretty, J., & Ward, 2001).

The integration of local wisdom into CBT provides a pathway for creating sustainable tourism models that respect cultural heritage while promoting economic development. Wearing and McDonald (2002) argued that tourism development must align with the values and traditions of local communities to ensure long-term success. By incorporating local wisdom into tourism practices, destinations can offer unique cultural experiences that differentiate them from mass tourism sites, attracting visitors seeking authentic and meaningful travel experiences. Tosun (2000) discussed the concept of community participation in tourism, highlighting that successful CBT initiatives require strong local involvement and ownership. In regions like Cigugur, where local wisdom is deeply embedded in daily life, community participation becomes even more crucial. The incorporation of traditional practices, such as ceremonies, rituals, and handicrafts, not only enhances the tourism experience but also ensures that cultural heritage is preserved for future generations.

(Scheyvens, 2002) emphasized the importance of community empowerment in tourism development, noting that tourism can only be truly sustainable if local communities have the capacity and resources to manage it. In Indonesia, Salam and Rosmadi (2020) explored how local wisdom has been integrated into CBT projects to promote sustainable tourism development. They found that local knowledge provided a framework for managing natural resources, developing tourism products, and preserving cultural practices. These findings are particularly relevant to Cigugur, where local wisdom is an untapped resource that could be leveraged to enhance tourism offerings and foster sustainable development.

The theoretical framework for this research is grounded in sustainable tourism theory and community empowerment theory. Sustainable tourism theory, as articulated by Butler (1999) and (Hall, 2010), emphasizes the need for tourism development that balances economic, social, and environmental concerns. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of CBT, as it seeks to create tourism models that are economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally responsible. Community empowerment theory, discussed by (Scheyvens, 1999) and Tosun (2000), underpins the principles of CBT by advocating for local ownership and participation in tourism development. This theory posits that local communities should have the power to shape tourism initiatives according to their values and needs, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed. In Cigugur, where local wisdom is a key aspect of community identity, this theoretical framework provides a lens through which to analyze the integration of traditional knowledge into CBT practices. This literature review has highlighted the importance of CBT and local wisdom in promoting sustainable tourism development. The integration of traditional knowledge into tourism practices not only enhances the authenticity of the tourism experience but also contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. The theoretical frameworks of sustainable tourism and community empowerment will guide the analysis of how CBT can be effectively implemented in Cigugur, ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism while preserving their cultural and environmental assets. This research will build on existing studies by exploring the unique context of Cigugur and providing insights into the role of local wisdom in sustainable tourism development.

Methods of Research

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the integration of local wisdom through Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in the development of tourism in Cigugur, Kuningan, Indonesia. Qualitative research methods are widely used in social sciences to investigate phenomena in their natural settings, allowing for an in-depth understanding of human experiences, behaviors, and perceptions. (J. W., 2014) and (Patton, 2015) highlight that qualitative methods are particularly suited for studies aimed at understanding complex social processes, such as the interaction between local communities and tourism development. Given the focus of this research on community involvement and cultural preservation, qualitative methods offer the best approach to explore these dynamics (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, 2011).

Discussion and Conclusion

Role of Local Wisdom in Tourism Development

The integration of local wisdom into CBT in Cigugur was a central theme in this study. Participants emphasized that local wisdom, derived from traditional practices, beliefs, and values, played a significant role in shaping the unique identity of Cigugur's tourism offerings. Local wisdom was not only viewed as a cultural asset but also as a key factor in promoting sustainable tourism practices (Salazar, 2012).

One participant, a village elder, explained: "Our ancestors have always respected the land and nature. We continue these practices, and now, they are part of the tourism experience. Visitors learn about our rituals and our way of life." Local wisdom was found to be embedded in various aspects of tourism activities, such as agricultural practices, traditional ceremonies, and the preservation of natural resources. This cultural heritage contributed to the uniqueness of Cigugur as a tourism destination and differentiated it from more commercialized forms of tourism.

Community Involvement in CBT

The active participation of the local community was identified as a key component of successful CBT initiatives in Cigugur. Most participants agreed that the involvement of local residents in decision-making processes ensured that tourism development aligned with the needs and aspirations of the community. The community's participation was facilitated through regular village meetings, where decisions regarding tourism activities and resource management were made collectively.

A local tourism operator shared: “We hold meetings where everyone can voice their opinion. It’s not just the leaders who decide, but the whole community.” Community involvement extended beyond decision-making to include roles in tourism management and operations. Residents were actively involved in hosting visitors, providing guided tours, and sharing knowledge about the area's cultural heritage. This participation not only provided economic benefits but also strengthened social cohesion within the community.

Table 1. Community Roles in CBT Development

Role	Description	Participants (%)
Tour Guides	Leading cultural and nature-based tours	35%
Homestay Operators	Providing accommodation in traditional village houses	25%
Cultural Performers	Performing traditional dances and rituals for tourists	15%
Handicraft Producers	Creating and selling locally made crafts to visitors	10%
Agricultural Producers	Organizing farm tours and selling organic products	15%

Source: processed by author, 2024

As seen in Table 1, the majority of the community’s involvement revolved around providing cultural tours and homestay accommodations, which allowed tourists to experience authentic village life while generating income for local families.

Challenges in Integrating Local Wisdom with CBT

Despite the successes, several challenges were identified in integrating local wisdom with tourism development. One of the most significant challenges was the commercialization of culture. Some participants expressed concerns that the increasing focus on tourism might lead to the commodification of their traditions, which could erode the authenticity of their cultural practices.

A village leader remarked: “We are proud of our traditions, but we are also worried that they might change just to please tourists. Some things are sacred and should not be for sale.” Another challenge was the lack of formal education and training in tourism management. While local residents were actively involved in tourism, many lacked the professional skills required to manage and promote their businesses effectively. This was particularly evident in areas such as marketing, financial management, and customer service.

Sustainable Tourism Practices

Sustainability was a recurring theme throughout the interviews and observations. Participants recognized the importance of balancing tourism development with the preservation of natural and cultural resources. Many noted that local wisdom itself was a form of sustainability, as traditional practices were deeply rooted in the sustainable use of resources.

One of the key sustainable practices identified was the use of traditional agricultural methods, which minimized environmental impact and promoted biodiversity. For example, the local farming community continued to use organic fertilizers and avoided the use of harmful pesticides, which not only protected the environment but also appealed to eco-conscious tourists.

A local farmer explained: “We use the same farming techniques that have been passed down for generations. It’s good for the land, and visitors appreciate learning about our methods.” Moreover, several community-led initiatives were in place to promote environmental conservation. These included reforestation efforts, waste management programs, and the promotion of eco-friendly tourism activities such as hiking and bird-watching.

Economic Impact of CBT

The economic benefits of CBT in Cigugur were widely acknowledged by participants. Tourism provided an alternative source of income for many families, particularly those involved in agriculture and handicrafts. However, the economic impact varied across different sectors of the community. While some participants reported significant financial gains from tourism, others, particularly those in more remote areas, indicated that they had yet to experience substantial benefits.

A homestay operator stated: “Tourism has helped me support my family. We can now sell handicrafts and offer rooms to visitors. It has made a big difference in our lives.” Despite these benefits, there were concerns about the unequal distribution of income. Some participants mentioned that those directly involved in tourism, such as homestay operators and tour guides, benefited more than others who were less involved. Additionally, the seasonal nature of tourism in Cigugur meant that income was not always stable throughout the year.

In summary, the findings of this study highlighted the central role of local wisdom in shaping the tourism experience in Cigugur, Kuningan. Community involvement was crucial to the success of CBT initiatives, ensuring that tourism development aligned with local values and needs. However, challenges such as the commercialization of culture and lack of formal training were identified as barriers to further development. Sustainable tourism practices, rooted in local traditions, were seen as key to preserving the cultural and natural heritage of Cigugur, while economic benefits were observed, albeit unevenly distributed. These findings provide valuable insights into the potential of CBT to promote sustainable tourism while preserving local wisdom and empowering communities.

Further exploration is needed to address the challenges identified, particularly in providing education and training in tourism management and ensuring the equitable distribution of economic benefits across the community.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the existing literature on Community-Based Tourism by demonstrating how local wisdom can be integrated into tourism development to promote sustainability and community empowerment. The findings underscore the importance of community involvement in tourism, particularly in decision-making and management. However, the challenges of commercialization, unequal economic distribution, and the lack of formal training highlight areas for improvement in future CBT initiatives. For policymakers, this research suggests that supporting CBT initiatives through capacity-building programs and infrastructure development is essential for ensuring that tourism benefits all members of the community. Moreover, protecting the authenticity of local wisdom while promoting tourism is a delicate balance that requires careful planning and collaboration between community members and tourism operators. At a global level, the lessons learned from Cigugur’s CBT initiatives can inform broader discussions on sustainable tourism and the role of cultural heritage in tourism development. By grounding tourism in local traditions and values, communities around the world can create tourism experiences that are both economically viable and culturally respectful.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future studies should focus on exploring the long-term socio-economic impacts of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in Cigugur, particularly in terms of income distribution and community empowerment. Further research could also examine the effectiveness of capacity-building programs in enhancing local residents' skills in tourism management, marketing, and financial sustainability. Additionally, comparative studies between Cigugur and other regions with successful CBT models could provide valuable insights into best practices and scalable strategies. Investigating the role of digital technology and social media in promoting CBT and preserving local wisdom would also be beneficial. Lastly, interdisciplinary research integrating environmental science, cultural studies, and tourism management could offer a more comprehensive approach to balancing economic growth with cultural and environmental sustainability in rural tourism destinations.

References

- Aref, F. (2011). Community participation for sustainable tourism development. *Life Science Journal*, 8(2), 20–25.
- Ashley, C., & Roe, D. (2001). Pro-Poor Tourism Strategies: Making Tourism Work for the Poor. ODI Poverty Briefing, 2–4.
- Asker, S., et al. (2010). Community-Based Tourism: Responsible Travel Supporting Sustainable Development. International Centre for Responsible Tourism.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Butler, R. (1999). Sustainable tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *Tourism Geographies*, 1(1), 7–25.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Giampiccoli, A., & Kalis, J. H. (2012). Community-based tourism and local culture: The case of the amaMpondo. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 18(2), 369–381.
- Goodwin, H., & Santilli, R. (2009). Community-based tourism: A success? International Centre for Responsible Tourism.
- Hall, C. M. (2010). Tourism and sustainable development. *Tourism and Development Journal*.
- Hoppers, C. O. (2002). Indigenous knowledge and the integration.
- J. W., C. (2014). *Research Design - Qualitatif, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). (2014th ed.). Sage Publication.
- Kuningan, P. K. (2024). No Tit.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Pretty, J., & Ward, H. (2001). Social capital and the environment. *World Development*.
- Rocharungsat, P. (2008a). Community-based tourism in Asia. *Asian Tourism*, 65–79.
- Rocharungsat, P. (2008b). Community-based tourism in Thailand: A case study. *Tourism Management Journal*.
- Salazar, N. B. (2012). Community-based cultural tourism: Issues, threats, and opportunities. *Tourism Journal*.
- Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism Management*, 20(2), 245–249. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(98\)00069-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(98)00069-7)
- Scheyvens, R. (2002). Tourism for development: Empowering communities. *Tourism Journal*.
- Tosun, C. (2000). Limits to community participation in the tourism development process in developing countries. *Tourism Management*, 21(6), 613–633. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(00\)00009-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00009-1)
- UNWTO. (2013). Sustainable tourism for development. UNWTO.
- Wahyuningtiyas, W., & Tukiman, M. (2016). Peran kearifan lokal dalam pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan. *Jurnal Pariwisata Berkelanjutan*.
- Wahyuningtiyas, Y. P., & Tukiman, M. (2017). Community participation in the development of tourism destinations: A case study in Indonesia. *Journal of Tourism Development*, 5(2), 73–81.
- Weaver, D. (2006). *Sustainable Tourism: Theory and Practice*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Zhao, W., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2007). Tourism and poverty alleviation: An integrative research framework. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 10(2-3), 119–143. <https://doi.org/10.2167/cit296.0>