

Research Article

Enabling Setting for Sustainable Village Tourism : Increasing the Empowerment of Beneficiary Communities

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Abstract: This study discusses the role of enabling setting in increasing the empowerment of beneficiary communities in Tamansari Tourism Village, Banyuwangi Regency. Enabling setting is understood as a supportive environment that includes inclusive policies, access to resources, community participation, and cultural and environmental preservation. The research was conducted with a qualitative approach through case studies, using in-depth interview techniques, participatory observation, and document studies. The results show that the empowerment of communities depends not only on increased economic income, but also on their ability to be actively involved in tourism management, safeguard local cultural values, and gain equitable access to training and information. Government support, partnerships with the private sector, and local initiatives are important factors in creating empowerment. However, challenges such as inequality of participation, limited digital access, and potential conflicts between community groups were also found. This study concludes that sustainable development of tourism villages must prioritize multi-stakeholder collaboration and strengthen local capacity equally. These findings make a practical contribution to the formulation of more inclusive policies and serve as a reference for the sustainable development of community-based tourism villages in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study highlights the critical role of continuous capacity building and knowledge sharing among community members to ensure long-term sustainability. By fostering an environment where local residents are equipped with the necessary skills and information, the community can better adapt to changing tourism trends and external pressures. Additionally, the integration of digital tools and platforms is recommended to bridge the information gap and enhance marketing efforts, thus expanding the reach of the tourism village. These strategies collectively support a more resilient and self-reliant community, capable of maintaining both economic growth and cultural integrity in the face of development challenges.

Keywords: Community Empowerment; Community Participation; Enabling Setting; Sustainable Development; Tourism Village.

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1. Introduction

Village tourism development has become one of the priority strategies in encouraging sustainable local economic growth in Indonesia (Supratman & Abbas, 2022). The concept of community-based tourism is seen as able to create space for village communities to become the subject of development, not just an object. However, in practice, various challenges such as weak village institutions, low community managerial capacity, and limited access to training and mentoring are often the main obstacles to the success of sustainable development of tourism villages.

The empowerment of communities benefiting from tourism is not solely measured by their involvement in economic activities, but also by the extent to which they have control, understanding, and capacity to manage tourism resources independently and sustainably (Abera, 2023; Ginanjar, 2023). Therefore, creating an effective enabling setting requires not only government intervention or donor institutions, but also synergy between the public, private, and local sectors that are oriented towards inclusive development. This research departs from the need to identify and analyze various supporting elements that can increase community empowerment in tourist villages. Thus, the approach taken not only focuses on economic output, but also on social transformation that allows the community to become the main manager as well as the beneficiary of village tourism sustainability. One of the key approaches in answering this challenge is through the creation of an enabling setting, which is an environment that allows people to be empowered in a sustainable manner.

In the context of sustainable development, community-based tourism is not only intended to increase village income, but also to strengthen the capacity of communities to manage the resources they have. Community empowerment as the main beneficiaries of tourism activities is highly dependent on various supporting factors that form the enabling setting (Lapuz, 2023; Markantoni et al., 2018). These factors include inclusive policies, access to training and technology, availability of infrastructure, and the quality of multi-stakeholder relationships (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024; Gutierrez, 2023). When the enabling setting is not formed optimally, what happens is not empowerment, but the community's dependence on external parties (Alimin et al., 2022; Fang et al., 2020).

Previous research has discussed the development of tourism villages in terms of economy and cultural preservation, but very few have specifically highlighted how enabling settings can create space for communities to be truly empowered. In this study, the researcher seeks to fill the gap by focusing on the interaction between the enabling setting and the empowerment of the beneficiary community in Tamansari Village. Thus, this research not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of tourism development, but also provides a practical basis for sustainable tourism village development policies.

Tamansari Village has received various support from the government, both in the form of tourism management training, infrastructure development, and environmental conservation campaigns. However, as revealed from the results of observations and interviews in this study, not all government programs reach all elements of society. Inequality in the opportunity for participation of some people is only spectators in tourism activities that take place in their own villages. In addition, geographical challenges such as difficult road access, as well as limited internet networks, also hinder the community empowerment process. The participation of the Tamansari Village community in the management of tourist villages shows complex dynamics. There are community groups that are very active and have a strategic position in decision-making, such as homestay managers, tour guides, and art groups. On the other hand, there are still many villagers who feel marginalized due to limited knowledge, lack of information, or lack of strong social networks. In some cases, internal conflicts between community groups are also an obstacle to the creation of harmonious cooperation in tourism management.

In terms of empowerment, the people of Tamansari Village have experienced an increase in income thanks to tourism activities, especially from the provision of accommodation, culinary, and handicraft products. However, the distribution of economic benefits is still uneven. In addition, the social and cultural dimensions of community empowerment must also be considered. For example, the increasing flow of tourists brings potential disruption to local cultural values, as well as the risk of cultural commercialization that erodes the authenticity of local traditions. Therefore, the empowerment referred to in this study is not only economic, but also includes social and cultural aspects.

In a theoretical context, this research is based on the theory of community empowerment which divides empowerment into four dimensions: economic, social, political, and psychological (Scheyvens, 1999). In addition, the ladder of participation theory is the basis for understanding the variation in community participation in decision-making (Okazaki, 2008). Meanwhile, the concept of enabling setting is used to identify environmental factors that can strengthen or hinder empowerment (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Tosun, 2006).

Community empowerment is the core of the development of sustainable tourism villages. Empowerment in tourism includes economic, social, political, and psychological dimensions (Scheyvens, 1999; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021; Wardhani & Susilowati, 2021). The importance of access to resources, active participation, and policy support (Tosun, 2006). In Indonesia, programs such as Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Village Funds

have become the government's efforts to create an enabling setting. However, the implementation is often uneven. In addition to economic and infrastructure challenges, socio-cultural aspects are also a critical concern. Tourism has the potential to erode local cultural values if not managed carefully (Bachri B, 1993; Oktaviyanti et al., 2013). Cultural preservation requires a balance between economic needs and the protection of local heritage (Prima, 2014; Tamrakar, 2021). Similar challenges arise in the environmental aspect. The increase in the number of tourists to Ijen Crater has the potential to cause ecosystem degradation, such as the accumulation of garbage and damage to climbing trails (East Java Natural Resources Conservation Center, 2025). Therefore, enabling settings must include environmental management mechanisms, such as tourist education programs and integrated waste management systems.

The urgency of this research lies in the effort to fill the gap in the literature on enabling setting in the context of tourism villages in Indonesia. So far, studies on tourist villages have focused more on economic impacts (Duha & Listyorini, 2023; Falade-Obalade & Dubey, 2014; Putri et al., 2022) or cultural preservation (Putra & Ariana, 2022; Zamroni et al., 2024), without exploring in depth how enabling settings can strengthen community empowerment. The novelty of the research lies in a holistic approach that combines policy analysis, community participation, and environmental sustainability in a single framework. The results can serve as a reference for policymakers and practitioners to create an environment that truly empowers communities. The practical significance of this study is to provide evidence-based recommendations for the government, tourism village managers, and the community.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type that focuses on Tamansari Village, Licin District, Banyuwangi Regency. This approach was chosen because it is considered most appropriate to explore in depth the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics that form the enabling setting in the context of empowering beneficiary communities in tourism villages. This method allows researchers to understand the subjective meaning, experience, and perception of the community regarding the management and utilization of community-based tourism potential (Sugiyono, 2020).

Tamansari Village, Licin District, Banyuwangi Regency, is one of the leading tourist villages in East Java located at the foot of Mount Ijen (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2021; Permatasari, 2022). The village is known for its natural beauty, rich local culture, and unique community activities, such as traditional arts and handicrafts. As a community-based tourist destination, Tamansari Village has attracted domestic and international tourists, especially those who want to explore Ijen Crater, one of Indonesia's tourism icons. The tourism potential of Tamansari Village not only encourages local economic growth but also becomes an important instrument in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially in reducing poverty (SDG 1), encouraging inclusive economic growth (SDG 8), and preserving terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15) (Ertien & Leily, 2021; Silfia Ayu Utami, 2022; Wicaksono, 2023).

The research design used is an interpretive phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is used to explore the community's life experience directly, especially in managing and feeling the impact of the presence of enabling settings in the development of tourist villages. The main focus of this approach is on the "how" and "why" of communities experiencing and responding to certain social conditions, including government policies, community participation, and access to resources. The location of the research is Tamansari Village, a tourist village located at the foot of Mount Ijen and has unique characteristics both in terms of socio-culture and geography. The research subjects consist of: (1) Community leaders (village heads, tourism village managers, traditional leaders); (2) Tourism actors (homestay owners, tour guides, MSME actors); (3) The general public who are not directly involved but who benefit from tourism and (4) Relevant external parties, such as representatives of local governments and local NGOs. The number of informants was selected purposively, taking into account the principle of representation from various social groups and the level of involvement in the management of tourist villages.

The data collection technique was carried out with three main approaches: in-depth interviews to explore the views of informants, participatory observations involving researchers in community activities, and document studies that included planning and policies related to tourism villages. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and

recorded for complete transcription. Observations and document studies aim to support field data and provide broader context.

With a phenomenological approach, this method provides a solid framework to understand enabling settings in the context of community empowerment in tourism villages. This approach allows researchers to dive deeply into social experiences and generate findings that are contextually and theoretically. This research is expected to be the foundation for more inclusive and sustainable policy interventions in the development of tourism villages in Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussion

This research produced a number of important findings that illustrate in depth how enabling setting plays a role in supporting the empowerment of the beneficiary community in Tamansari Village. The findings were analyzed through five main themes: (1) Government policy support; (2) Community participation; (3) Access to resources; (4) Forms of empowerment and (5) Environmental and social challenges that affect the sustainability of tourism villages.

3.1. Government Policy Support: Between Potential and Implementation Reality

Government policy support has a very important role in developing tourism villages and empowering local communities. In Tamansari Village, several policies that support community empowerment include the provision of managerial training and the development of tourism infrastructure. For example, the government provides training on homestay management, art group management, and local crafts. These training programs aim to strengthen the capacity of the community in managing the tourism sector independently.

However, even though this policy has been implemented, the distribution of benefits from this policy has not been evenly distributed. In observations in the field, some people do not have enough access to participate in training due to limited information or poor access to transportation. For example, most training is only conducted in village centers, while residents in more remote areas struggle to access it. In addition, geographical constraints, such as poor road access, have also worsened this condition.

Government policies also focus on infrastructure development, such as road construction and the provision of public facilities that support tourism activities. However, the problem of limited internet networks hinders the management of information related to tourist villages. Limited internet networks in tourist villages are often the main barrier to effective information management (Nuryananda et al., 2024; Wang & Wang, 2023). This limited access leads to difficulties in sharing important data about tourism village activities and policies to relevant parties, such as the government and visitors (Junaid et al., 2022). These problems hinder the development of tourism villages that should be able to utilize technology to improve the promotion and efficiency of their management. This shows that government policies need to pay more attention to the needs of the community as a whole, both from the physical, social, and digital aspects in order to achieve optimal impact.

3.2. Community Participation: Variation in Levels of Involvement

The active participation of the community in the management of tourist villages in Tamansari Village has experienced very complex dynamics. Based on in-depth interviews with various community groups, it was found that there are two main groups in participation: active groups and marginalized groups. Active groups consist of homestay managers, tour guides, and arts and crafts groups. They have a strategic position in decision-making related to tourism village policies and have a strong network to access resources. This group is active in economic activities, derives direct benefits from tourism development, and even has control over the management of important decisions. For example, homestay managers have a say in terms of lodging rates and space utilization policies in tourist villages.

On the other hand, the marginalized groups are those who do not have equal access to government training and programs. People who are less involved in this management feel like spectators in the tourism that takes place in their own villages. This happens due to information inequality, weak social networks, and limited knowledge related to tourism management. For example, people who work as farmers or domestic workers do not have equal opportunities to participate in training or participate in tourism-related decision-making. This situation shows that community participation in the management of tourism villages is still not fully inclusive. Community participation in Tamansari Village can be mapped in the

framework of the ladder of participation, where only some groups are at the level of deliberative participation, while some others are still at the symbolic level (Okazaki, 2008).

Some of the factors that hinder participation include low levels of education, lack of information, and the dominance of local elites in management. Facts show that low levels of education often hinder public understanding of the importance of participation in resource management or policy (B et al., 2021; Tjilen & Paul Adryani Moento, 2023). A study in several regions also revealed that the lack of clear and transparent information about government programs discourages many people from actively participating (Lussy & Utomo, 2024; Salbiah et al., 2020). In addition, the dominance of local elites in decision-making has been shown to create inequality, where decisions are more determined by a small group of people without involving the general public (Aprigiyana et al., 2021). This condition further exacerbates inequalities in the management and distribution of benefits.

3.3. Access to Resources: Inequality and Capacity Gap

Access to various resources, both human, technological, and financial resources, is a factor that greatly affects the empowerment of the community in tourist villages. Tamansari Village, despite its immense natural potential and very attractive cultural diversity, faces major challenges regarding access to the resources needed to develop their tourism potential.

Most of the people of Tamansari Village who are involved in tourism businesses such as homestays and culinary businesses, feel hampered by limited capital and access to technology. Although training has been provided, people do not always have the resources to implement the knowledge they have acquired. For example, most homestays still use simple facilities that are not integrated with technology for marketing, such as social media or other digital platforms. Without adequate access to capital and technology, it is difficult for them to increase their business capacity.

In addition, despite efforts to build basic infrastructure such as roads and clean water, there are still many remote areas in Tamansari Village that have not received enough attention. This results in the inhibition of the flow of tourists who come, due to poor road access. If access to basic infrastructure and resources is uneven, then community empowerment will not run optimally. The results of the study show that access to resources, both in the form of training, business capital, and technology, is still uneven. Communities that are members of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and tourism management organizations have greater access to various training and development programs. However, there are several local initiatives that are quite innovative, such as the formation of digital marketing study groups by the young generation of villages. This shows the potential for community-based digital transformation that needs to be further facilitated by local governments.

Access to digital resources is very important in the development of tourist villages, as it allows for a wider and more effective dissemination of information to potential visitors (Sujana et al., 2023). Research shows that villages that utilize digital platforms for promotion experience a significant increase in the number of tourists (Meliza et al., 2024). In addition, the use of digital technology also helps in more efficient management, such as in monitoring and evaluating tourism activities, which leads to improved service quality and visitor experience.

3.4. Community Empowerment: Economic, Social, and Cultural Dimensions

Community empowerment in the context of tourism in Tamansari Village covers various dimensions, both economic, social, and cultural. Economically, people who are directly involved in the tourism sector, such as homestay managers and culinary businesses, have experienced a significant increase in income. However, the distribution of these economic benefits is still uneven. Those who are not directly involved in tourism, such as farmers or domestic workers, do not feel the same impact. Community empowerment in tourist villages plays a major role in improving the local economy, because active communities can create new jobs and manage resources independently (Mustangin et al., 2017). Data shows that tourism villages that involve communities in direct management tend to have more stable and rapidly growing incomes, compared to those that do not involve local communities (Syarifah & Rochani, 2022).

From the social side, community empowerment in Tamansari Village also faces challenges related to changes in local cultural values. Community empowerment in tourism villages plays a key role in creating an inclusive social structure, where each individual has a role in decision-making and management of local resources. By actively involving the

community, tourism villages can strengthen social values, such as mutual cooperation and mutual support, which strengthen local cultural identity and improve overall social well-being.

In the cultural dimension, the preservation of dance, traditional music, and traditional ceremonies has become more alive because it is included in the tourism agenda. However, there are also concerns related to the commercialization of culture, where some residents feel that sacred values are beginning to be eroded by the demands of tourism. Although tourism can increase people's income, there is a great risk that local culture can be eroded due to excessive commercialization (Dinata et al., 2024). For example, some traditional traditions that were originally only for the local community are now being shown to tourists, and this has the potential to change the meaning and purpose of these traditions.

Overall, the empowerment referred to in this study is not only in terms of increasing income, but also includes social and cultural dimensions. An empowered society not only has access to economic income, but is also able to maintain and nurture their culture. For this reason, it is important for tourism village managers to balance economic benefits and the preservation of local culture. The findings of this study support the theory of community empowerment which emphasizes the importance of balance between economic, social, and cultural dimensions (Scheyvens, 1999).

3.5. Environmental Challenges: Unpreparedness to Face the Flow of Tourists

The environmental and social challenges faced by Tamansari Village have a great influence on the sustainability of tourism village management. The increase in the number of tourists coming to Tamansari Village has the potential to cause ecosystem degradation, such as damage to hiking trails and garbage accumulation. This happens due to suboptimal waste management and the lack of awareness of tourists about the importance of maintaining natural cleanliness.

On the social side, the emergence of inequality in community participation causes social tension between groups involved in tourism and those who do not. Conflicts between these groups hinder the creation of harmonious cooperation and can worsen tourism management. If this inequality is not addressed, then the sustainability of tourism will be threatened. In addition, pressure on local ecosystems such as coffee plantations and forests around Mount Ijen began to be seen due to land clearing for accommodation and tourist road access. This is an early alarm for the ecological sustainability of tourist villages.

Therefore, sustainable environmental management and inclusive social policies are essential to maintain the sustainability of tourism in the village. Efforts to reduce environmental impact can be done by increasing public and tourist awareness of the importance of maintaining cleanliness, as well as introducing an effective waste management system (Susanto & Alhsani, 2023). On the social side, it is important to increase the capacity of all groups of people to participate in the management of tourism equitably (Singgalen & Kudubun, 2017).

3.6. Multi-Stakeholder Roles: Opportunities and Tensions

Collaboration between the community, government, and the private sector is an important element in the enabling setting. In Tamansari Village, there is a partnership between tourism village managers and tour operators and travel agents. This partnership provides advantages in the promotion and sale of tour packages. However, there are tensions when commercial interests collide with local values. Some tourism actors complained about external interventions that were considered to ignore the cultural and social context of the community. This shows the importance of building an understanding of shared values in tourism development. The village government needs to play a role as a facilitator and mediator who is able to bridge the interests of various parties while still prioritizing the welfare of the local community as the main goal. The results of the research are also aligned with the enabling framework which includes the dimensions of policy, participation, resource access, and environmental conservation (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). The active role of the community as the main actor ensures the sustainability of authentic tourism activities based on local wisdom (Doni Ikhlas et al., 2024). The government provides regulations, infrastructure, and assistance that strengthen the governance capacity of tourism villages (Rahmandari et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the private sector provides capital support, market access, and product innovation that increases the competitiveness of village tourism. This collaboration is a strategic enabling setting to encourage the transformation of tourist villages into inclusive and sustainable flagship destinations.

3.7. Strategic Recommendations

Sustainable development of tourism villages requires a comprehensive approach that includes various strategic aspects. Strengthening local capacity is a crucial first step, where local governments need to expand the reach of training and mentoring to marginalized groups so that no one is left behind in the development process. On the other hand, improving environmental infrastructure such as waste management and an adequate sanitation system is essential to maintain the quality of the environment and the comfort of tourists. Digital transformation must also be inclusive by encouraging digital literacy for all tourism village actors, so that they are able to expand market access and increase competitiveness. Development planning must also be data-based and involve the active participation of all stakeholders to suit the real needs of the community. No less important, the preservation of local culture needs to be facilitated through the strengthening of cultural institutions that support the active involvement of the community in maintaining the local identity and values of tourist villages.

These results and discussions show that community empowerment in the context of tourism villages does not occur automatically, but must be built through a solid and inclusive enabling setting. With a participatory community-based approach, Tamansari Village can continue to be an example of a sustainable tourism village that is not only economically attractive, but also empowered from a social and cultural perspective.

In Tamansari Village, the empowerment of the community is reflected in their ability to actively participate in the planning, management, and distribution of tourism benefits. However, this participation is often constrained by limited infrastructure, human resource capacity, and conflicts of interest between stakeholders. For example, poor road access and limited internet networks hinder tourism promotion, while lack of tourism management training makes it difficult for people to compete professionally. In addition, the dependence on the agricultural sector as the main livelihood causes some people to be reluctant to switch to the tourism sector. This challenge shows that the potential of tourism villages will not be optimized without an adequate enabling setting.

4. Conclusions

This study emphasizes that community empowerment in the context of tourism villages is not solely determined by the amount of economic benefits received, but more deeply includes the ability of the community to manage, make decisions, and maintain the sustainability of tourism development independently. Tamansari Village is a real example of how the concept of enabling setting or supporting environment plays a central role in creating a community that is not only an object, but also an active subject in the process of developing a tourist village. Community empowerment is proven to be realized when there is integration between government policies, inclusive community participation, access to resources (including digital), and balanced cultural and environmental preservation.

From a policy perspective, the role of the government has proven to be important in providing training, infrastructure, and institutional support. However, this study also shows that unequal and less inclusive policies risk reinforcing inequality in the distribution of tourism benefits. Therefore, a policy design that is data-based, participatory, and sensitive to local needs is needed. Inequality in community participation is one of the biggest challenges, where some people are active and have access to economic benefits, while others are still marginalized due to limited information, education, and social networks. This shows that true empowerment can only be achieved through equal access to development processes and benefits.

From the aspect of resources, limited capital, access to technology, and infrastructure such as poor internet networks and road access are the main obstacles that hinder the capacity of the community to develop. Meanwhile, the emergence of local initiatives such as digital marketing learning groups by village youth shows that the potential of the community is actually very large and can be maximized with the right support. In addition to the economic dimension, empowerment also includes social and cultural aspects. The active involvement of the community in preserving local arts, traditional ceremonies, and traditions shows the existence of a collective awareness to maintain cultural identity despite the risks of commercialization of tourism.

The physical and social environment is also an important element that cannot be ignored. Environmental degradation due to the increase in the number of tourists and conflicts between community groups are indicators that tourism sustainability will not be achieved without inclusive environmental and social management. In this context, multi-stakeholder collaboration between communities, governments, and the private sector needs to be managed in a fair, transparent, and based manner on local values. Collaboration that is not managed properly can actually trigger tensions between economic interests and the preservation of local values.

Thus, this research makes an important contribution in enriching the discourse on sustainable tourism village development. The concept of enabling setting has proven to be an effective approach in encouraging community empowerment, as long as it is implemented in a fair, participatory, and sustainable manner. The results of this research can also be a practical reference for policymakers, tourism village managers, and companion institutions in designing programs that not only focus on economic growth, but also on inclusive and equitable social transformation. The success of tourism village development ultimately depends on how much the community is given space, opportunity, and capacity to become a major actor in the development of its own village.

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