



The Role Of Talaga Bodas Tourist Destination Managers In Increasing Tourist Attractiveness

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Abstract:

Background.

Aims. This study aims to examine the role of managers in developing and enhancing tourist attractions in Talaga Bodas, Garut Regency, West Java.

Methods. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through direct field observations, in-depth interviews, and document collection from managers, local residents, and tourists.

Result. The main finding is that the management role is still largely held by the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), while village governments and local communities are less involved. Currently, management focuses more on preserving and maintaining the area, but has not yet fully encompassed the development of tourist attractions, facility improvements, or integrated digital promotion. However, Talaga Bodas's extraordinary natural potential, combined with community support and tourist interest in nature and educational tourism, offers significant opportunities for the development of this destination. Active involvement from managers is necessary to foster collaboration among the BKSDA, local government, and the community, thereby creating a sustainable destination management system. Strategic steps, such as improving infrastructure, training human resources, and promoting environmentally friendly digital initiatives, are crucial to attracting more tourists.

Conclusion. This study demonstrates that the task of destination managers is not only to preserve nature but also to achieve a balance between economic, social, and ecological aspects. With collaborative management and a focus on community empowerment, Talaga Bodas has excellent potential to become a sustainable nature tourism destination, providing tangible benefits to residents while enhancing the region's tourism reputation.

Keywords: role of management, destination management, tourist attractions, sustainable tourism, Talaga Bodas



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INTRODUCTION

Tourism destination management is no longer merely an operational activity but has evolved into a complex strategic responsibility. Managers are expected to act as

coordinators, integrating various tourism components, including attractions, amenities, accessibility, and support services, to build strong competitiveness. (Faur1 & Ban2, 2022).

Unfortunately, in Indonesia, the challenges in destination management remain significant. Fragmented authority, weak coordination among stakeholders, and limited managerial capacity of local managers prevent tourism potential from being fully maximized, thus maintaining low destination competitiveness.(Alam et al., nd)However, research shows that the more effective the management role, the higher the level of tourist satisfaction, the volume of visits, and the economic sustainability of the local community. (Reinhold et al., 2023).

Talaga Bodas, located in Garut, West Java, is a notable example. This destination, situated 1,720 meters above sea level, offers the extraordinary uniqueness of a grayish-white crater lake due to its high sulfur content, active fumaroles, hot mud pools, and natural hot springs.(Nurrahman et al., 2024)In fact, the central government plans to develop infrastructure through Vice President Ma'ruf Amin in October 2024. (DISPARBUD, nd).

However, the reality on the ground shows a different picture. Research by(Alvianna et al., 2020)identified four crucial dimensions for the tourist experience: attractions (especially photo spots), accessibility (where local transportation is crucial given the 20.5 km distance from the city center), amenities (with restrooms a top priority), and additional services (such as communication access). Unfortunately, the current infrastructure remains in poor condition, with rocky roads that can only accommodate one vehicle at a time, and steep cliffs on both sides, all of which pose a threat to the comfort and safety of tourists.

Centralized management under the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) also results in limited involvement of village governments and local communities.(Nurmaidi & Sabardila, 2025)Public facilities, information systems, and digital promotion are still minimal. As a result, the role of management in developing tourist attractions has not been optimally optimized.

In recent literature, the role of destination managers has evolved rapidly from being administrative to being strategic, focusing on creating value and enhancing tourist experiences.(Bernaki & Marso, 2023). (UNWTO 2024, nd) defines a Destination Management Organization (DMO) as an entity that manages and markets destinations, encompassing functions such as stakeholder coordination, product development, promotion, and performance monitoring.

Recent research identifies four critical roles: first, as a coordinator and facilitator who bridges the interests of various parties.(Viglianisi & Rugolo, 2020); second, as an innovator who develops products according to market trends(Olszewski, 2021); third, as a communicator who builds the destination image(Koufodontis & Gaki, 2020); and fourth, as a steward who maintains the sustainability of natural and cultural resources(Wibowo et al., 2022).

Especially for natural tourist destinations like Talaga Bodas, the challenges are even more complex, as they must balance environmental conservation with economic development.(Bhammar et al., 2021)Studies show that conservation area managers often face a dilemma: balancing the protection of ecosystems with improving accessibility for tourists. Therefore, an adaptive and sustainable management approach is needed.

Tourist attractions, according to Law No. 10 of 2009, are anything that has uniqueness, beauty, and value from natural, cultural, and man-made resources.(UNWTO 2023, nd)Adding that attraction is not only physical objects, but also experiences, activities, and narratives created at the destination.

Although several studies on Talaga Bodas have been conducted, most have focused solely on tourist preferences for the Mount Talaga Bodas tourism component. No comprehensive study has specifically analyzed the role of management in enhancing its attractiveness. Yet, understanding this is crucial for formulating appropriate development strategies.

This research aims to fill this gap by answering four main questions: What is the actual role of current managers? What factors influence the effectiveness of their role? What ideal management model is needed? And what obstacles are faced, and how can they be overcome?

The purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the role of Talaga Bodas destination management in increasing tourist appeal and to formulate a more effective and sustainable management model. Specifically, the objectives are to identify the actual role of management, evaluate its effectiveness from the perspective of stakeholders (including the government, community, and tourists), identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and formulate recommendations for an optimal management model.

The results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to managers, local governments, and local communities in designing more effective strategies. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the literature on destination management,

particularly regarding the role of managers in nature tourism destinations in developing countries, such as Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Destination Management and the Role of Managers

Destination management is a systematic approach to managing all elements that comprise a tourist destination, aiming to achieve the goal of sustainable tourism development.(UNWTO 2023, nd)defines destination management as "the strategic coordination of all elements that make up a tourism destination, including attractions, accessibility, amenities, and supporting activities." This definition emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that integrates the various components of a destination.

In contemporary literature, the role of destination managers has evolved into a multi-dimensional one.(Faur1 & Ban2, 2022)Identified five primary roles of a Destination Management Organization (DMO): (1) coordination and facilitation between stakeholders, (2) development of tourism products and services, (3) marketing and promotion of destinations, (4) visitor management, and (5) monitoring and evaluation of destination performance. Each of these roles requires specific competencies and is interrelated in creating a quality tourist experience.

(Sorokina et al., 2022) emphasized that in the era of digital disruption and changing tourist behavior, destination managers must be able to transform from their traditional role as "information providers" to "experience orchestrators." This means managers not only provide information about the destination but also actively design and facilitate the creation of memorable and shareable tourism experiences.

(Soares et al., 2022) Introduced the concept of "smart destination management," which emphasizes the use of digital technology to improve operational efficiency and the quality of the tourist experience. In this context, the management's role includes: (1) developing the destination's digital infrastructure, (2) integrating data from various sources for decision-making, (3) personalizing technology-based services, and (4) real-time monitoring for crisis management and security.

Research in Indonesia shows that the effectiveness of the role of destination managers is greatly influenced by the local governance context.(Akbar, 2022) found that destination managers in Indonesia often face challenges such as fragmented authority, limited budgets, and weak inter-agency coordination. Therefore, strengthening institutional

capacity and developing collaborative mechanisms are essential prerequisites for effective management.

Tourist Attraction Theory

Tourist attractions are the primary factor that drives tourists to a destination. According to Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, tourist attractions encompass anything unique, beautiful, and valuable that attracts tourists.(UNWTO 2023, nd)Also emphasizes that tourist attractions involve emotional and cultural interactions generated through the tourist experience, not just the physical objects visited.

According to research(Manihuruk & Sari, 2024)Tourists' perceptions of a destination's attractiveness are increasingly influenced by environmental quality, safety, and the authenticity of local experiences. Therefore, natural destinations like Talaga Bodas must maintain environmental sustainability while providing educational and meaningful tourism experiences.

From a social perspective, tourism appeal can be enhanced through community involvement in culture-based activities that reflect local culture.(Prayoga et al., 2024), emphasized that community-based tourism plays a crucial role in strengthening cultural identity, creating jobs, and increasing a sense of community ownership of a destination. Furthermore, digital technology support also expands promotional reach and enhances tourists' positive perceptions of a destination.(Nogueira & Carvalho, 2022). Thus, increasing the tourist appeal of Talaga Bodas requires an integrated approach that balances environmental, social, and economic aspects.

Sustainable Tourism Concept

Sustainable tourism is a form of tourism development that seeks to balance economic interests, environmental sustainability, and the social welfare of local communities.(Battaglia, 2017)Sustainable tourism is defined as tourism activities that consider both current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, and meet the needs of tourists and host communities.

Community-based tourism is an important approach to strengthening local community involvement in the planning and management of tourist destinations, thereby distributing economic benefits more fairly and enhancing community welfare.(Demolingo et al., 2024)

(Jones & Comfort, 2019), adding that destination resilience is a crucial element of sustainable tourism. This resilience can only be achieved if the destination has strong governance, adaptive infrastructure, and a collective awareness to maintain the tourism ecosystem. Therefore, the implementation of sustainable tourism in Talaga Bodas requires integrating environmental conservation, community empowerment, and local economic diversification to sustainably increase tourist appeal without sacrificing local ecology and culture.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with effective data triangulation analysis used to identify problems and solutions in developing tourism destinations, because it allows validation of data from various sources.(Mierdhani & Dewi, nd)The TalagaBodas destination was chosen as a case study because it represents a unique natural tourism destination management phenomenon, with centralized management under a conservation agency (BKSDA) and a transitional phase towards sustainable tourism development.

(Cherkaoui & Oudrhough, 2024)Explains that case studies are appropriate when the research question focuses on "how" and "why," the researcher has limited control over the events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. This perfectly aligns with our research objective of understanding how the manager's role is implemented and the factors that influence its effectiveness.

The research was conducted in the Talaga Bodas tourist area, Garut Regency, West Java, during October 2025. This location was chosen because it is a developing volcanic natural destination and is a priority for sustainable tourism development by the local government.

The data collection process was conducted through three main methods. First, participant observation, in which researchers directly observed tourism activities, environmental conditions, and interaction patterns between managers, tourists, and the community. Second, in-depth interviews to further explore the roles of managers, challenges, and implemented sustainability practices. Third, documentation included annual reports, visitation statistics, and regional regulations related to tourism area management. The combination of these three methods provided source triangulation, enhancing the credibility and validity of the research results.(Marlina et al., 2025).

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which comprises three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or

verification. In the reduction stage, data were selected and simplified to focus on aspects relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation was done in both narrative and matrix forms to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships between variables. The final stage, concluding, was conducted iteratively and was open to revision as data developed in the field.

The choice of a qualitative descriptive approach was deemed most relevant to the objectives of this research, as it focuses not only on measuring phenomena but also on a deep understanding of the context and meaning behind them. Therefore, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in formulating natural tourism destination management strategies that are oriented towards environmental, social, and economic sustainability, while also supporting the improvement of the welfare of local communities around the Talaga Bodas area.

DISCUSSION

Current Management Condition of the Talaga Bodas Tourist Destination

The management of the Talaga Bodas tourist destination is currently under the responsibility of the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA). Interviews with the manager revealed that there has been no direct collaboration between the village government and the BKSDA in managing the tourist area. The village head stated that the village has not been involved in decision-making or managing tourism activities. This indicates that the Talaga Bodas management system remains centralized and has not adopted the collaborative approach recommended by the UNWTO's Destination Management Organization (DMO) concept.

The division of the Talaga Bodas area into two villages, Sukahurip and Sukamenak, presents a unique coordination challenge. Although the location has strong natural tourism potential, there is no integrated management mechanism involving the local government, community, and local tourism businesses. This situation has the potential to lead to overlapping roles and less than optimal utilization of local economic potential.

Interviews with the manager (Mr. Iin) revealed that the current management strategy still focuses on simple digital promotions, primarily through social media. There has been no significant innovation related to developing tourist attractions, improving facilities, or diversifying tourism products. The management's primary focus is on maintaining the natural condition and cleanliness of the area through routine daily checks during tourism

activities. This approach demonstrates a conservative awareness of environmental sustainability, but has not been matched by an innovative, experience-oriented strategy for attraction development.

Observations also show that the institutional management structure remains limited to administrative functions and physical maintenance of the area. There is no planned monitoring and evaluation system to measure destination performance, such as the number of visits, tourist satisfaction, or economic impact on the community. Therefore, Talaga Bodas' management is still at a basic management level, focusing more on area security than on sustainable tourism development.

Local Community Involvement in Tourism Management

Interviews indicate that community involvement around Talaga Bodas is still limited. They primarily play a role in supporting economic activities such as opening food stalls, providing rest areas, and renting simple facilities. However, there has been no direct participation in planning, supervision, or decision-making regarding the management of the tourist area. The village head also stated that his community has not been officially involved by the main management agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA).

This situation illustrates that the Talaga Bodas management approach remains top-down, with the community's role as a strategic partner under-emphasized. Nevertheless, sustainable tourism principles emphasize the importance of empowering local communities (community-based tourism) to ensure that economic and social benefits directly benefit residents.

Economically, only a small portion of the community benefits directly from tourism activities. According to management, the majority of residents still rely on agriculture as their primary source of income. Tourism provides supplemental employment for a small minority, such as selling food, renting out parking spaces, or serving as area guides.

Despite this, the community has shown a positive attitude towards tourists. Interviews revealed that residents strive to provide excellent service to visitors, recognizing that hospitality and comfort can enhance the destination's image. This represents a social opportunity that can be developed through training and partnership programs, such as training local guides, managing homestays, or promoting local products.

Minimal community involvement in formal management structures also has the potential to lead to unequal benefits. If not properly regulated, centralized management by

government institutions without citizen participation can hinder the sense of ownership of the destination. This sense of ownership is crucial for maintaining environmental sustainability and the sustainability of nature tourism.

Tourist Perceptions of Tourist Attractions and Facilities

Interviews with tourists indicate that Talaga Bodas's primary attraction lies in its natural beauty, cool air, and serene atmosphere. Tourists come to enjoy the views of the greenish-white crater and the surrounding forest. Most visitors come from Garut, Bandung, and Tasikmalaya, coming for recreation, photography, or to unwind.

In terms of facilities, tourists considered the existing facilities to be adequate, including parking areas, food stalls, and public restrooms. However, these facilities are still limited and need improvement, especially on weekends when visitor numbers increase. Some suggested providing more seating, gazebos, and safe vantage points for enjoying the scenery.

Access to Talaga Bodas is considered quite good, although the road is narrow and slippery in some areas. Visitors driving privately find it convenient due to the readily available directions, but they hope for road improvements on the uphill route to enhance safety during the rainy season.

Some tourists also highlighted the lack of internet connectivity and information boards at tourist sites. They hoped for explanations of the history, ecosystem, and visiting regulations to make the experience more meaningful. This highlights the importance of providing information and education to support nature tourism activities.

In terms of promotion, many tourists learn about Talaga Bodas through social media or stories from friends, rather than official advertising. They believe this tourism destination has enormous potential if managed with more active digital promotion. Managers could create an official account, display photos and videos of the destination, and provide clear information about ticket prices and facilities.

In general, tourists' perceptions of Talaga Bodas are very positive, citing its beauty and natural surroundings. However, they hope for improved facilities, more convenient access, and broader promotion to increase the awareness of the tourist attraction and attract more visitors.

The Role of Management in the Attraction of Talaga Bodas

Analysis based on interviews and field observations reveals that the role of the Talaga Bodas tourist destination manager has a significant influence on both the enhancement and limitations of tourist appeal. In this regard, the manager acts as the primary actor directing destination development through three integral aspects: operational, managerial, and strategic, which are interrelated and serve as benchmarks for management effectiveness in promoting sustainable appeal.

Operationally, Talaga Bodas management remains focused on maintaining the area and monitoring tourist activities, such as conducting daily checks to ensure safety and environmental sustainability, as stated in an interview with the manager (Mr. Iin). However, this approach tends to be reactive and is not yet supported by long-term planning. In terms of facilities, tourists reported improvements in toilet cleanliness and parking arrangements, demonstrating management's contribution to basic comfort. However, the limited number of public facilities, such as toilets and gazebos, as well as the lack of educational resources and information boards, detracts from the tourist experience, especially during peak periods.

In terms of management, the Talaga Bodas management system is centralized, with the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) as the dominant institution, limiting the participation of village governments, local businesses, and the surrounding community in decision-making. Although the community contributes through the provision of food stalls and services, their involvement has not been formalized, thus limiting the potential for collaboration between stakeholders. This also leads to weak coordination between promotion and facility development, such as individual promotions conducted through social media without a unified strategy, even though collaboration is crucial for building the identity of a natural destination like Talaga Bodas.

Strategically, the management's role in strengthening attractions remains limited to digital visual promotion, which is effective in raising public awareness but insufficient for regional competitiveness. Interviews revealed the absence of innovative tourism products such as educational trekking packages, geothermal tourism, or interpretive conservation activities, resulting in short visits and a focus on photos rather than immersive experiences.

Tourist perceptions, as expressed by Ka Jia, Bunga, and Putri, emphasize Talaga Bodas's extraordinary potential for natural beauty and ambiance, but demand improvements in facilities, information, and cleanliness. Improved facility management directly contributes

to satisfaction, although complaints about the lack of seating, information boards, and educational activities highlight the need to address the experiential tourism trend.

Overall, the current management role of Talaga Bodas is at a basic stage with a conservation orientation, not yet achieving holistic and sustainable destination management. Operational aspects demonstrate a commitment to conservation, but managerial and strategic aspects require strengthening. The relationship between management and attractiveness is reciprocal: effective management of facilities, services, and innovation enhances tourist satisfaction, while limited management limits the impact of natural resources on visits and local well-being.

Therefore, a transformation of management from area guardians to destination managers is necessary, through cross-sector collaboration, human resource capacity building, and an integrated promotional strategy that emphasizes conservation values and local uniqueness. With these steps, Talaga Bodas can become a model for managing an attractive, sustainable, and inclusive nature tourism destination.

Social and Economic Impact on the Surrounding Community

Tourism activities at Talaga Bodas have a direct impact on the lives of the surrounding community, particularly in terms of economic benefits. Locals earn additional income from small businesses, including food stalls, parking lots, vehicle rentals, and souvenir sales. Some residents also work as cleaners, groundskeepers, or tour guides.

This positive impact is beginning to be seen in the increased circulation of money in the surrounding area. Some residents who previously relied solely on agriculture now have an additional source of income from the tourism sector. The presence of tourists has spurred the emergence of new business opportunities, especially for young people interested in the culinary and tourism sectors.

From a social perspective, tourism fosters a sense of community among residents. They strive to maintain the safety and comfort of the area, ensuring tourists feel at home. Residents are also beginning to recognize the importance of maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability. This attitude provides crucial social capital in supporting the sustainability of nature tourism.

However, the socio-economic impacts are not felt evenly. Only a small portion of the community is directly involved in tourism activities. The majority remain observers and lack

access to further participation. This is due to the lack of a clear system for dividing roles between management and the community.

Furthermore, the increase in visitor numbers also brings new challenges, such as waste and congestion at the entrance to the area. If not properly managed, these conditions can disrupt tourist comfort and damage the surrounding environment. Collaboration between management, the government, and the community is needed to address these issues.

To strengthen its positive impact, the community needs to be involved in every tourism development activity. Business training, homestay management, and promotion of local products can increase the economic independence of residents. This way, tourism in Talaga Bodas will not only be a temporary source of income but also a means of long-term community empowerment.

Challenges and Opportunities for Developing Talaga Bodas Tourism

Talaga Bodas has significant potential to develop into a leading natural tourism destination in West Java. The beauty of the crater, the cool air, and the natural surroundings are key draws for tourists. However, the management of this destination still faces several challenges that must be addressed immediately to ensure optimal tourism development.

The first challenge is the limited availability of facilities and infrastructure. The number of toilets, seating, and parking areas is still insufficient for the number of visitors, especially on weekends. The road to the site is also narrow and slippery during the rainy season. These conditions reduce tourist comfort and can discourage repeat visits.

The second challenge is the lack of coordination between management institutions and local communities. There is no integrated management system that actively involves all parties. As a result, tourism activities proceed without a clear direction, and economic benefits are not shared equally. Local communities remain supporting actors, not primary partners in tourism management.

The third challenge is the lack of promotion and utilization of digital technology. Information about Talaga Bodas is still limited to personal social media, and there is no official account that consistently manages promotional content. Yet, digital promotion could attract more tourists, especially from outside the region.

However, Talaga Bodas also offers many opportunities. Its unique natural potential can be developed into educational and ecotourism destinations that emphasize

environmental conservation. This area could serve as a location for nature study activities, research, and green tourism campaigns for school and university students.

Another opportunity lies in empowering local communities. Residents can be involved in managing homestays, providing traditional cuisine, and providing local tour guides. With training and mentoring, communities can become part of a sustainable tourism economy.

Furthermore, collaboration between local governments, the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), and the private sector can open up investment opportunities for improving tourism facilities. This could include road construction, adequate parking areas, and tourist-friendly public spaces. Collaborative management will create a balance between nature conservation and economic growth.

By overcoming challenges and capitalizing on existing opportunities, Talaga Bodas can develop into a sustainable nature tourism destination that provides broad benefits to the community while maintaining environmental sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Research on the management of the Talaga Bodas tourist destination reveals extraordinary natural tourism potential, yet it lacks effective, participatory, and sustainable management. Based on field findings and interviews with managers, local residents, tourists, and village heads, several key conclusions can be drawn:

Talaga Bodas is currently managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), with a primary focus on environmental preservation. Activities focus more on maintaining the area and monitoring tourism activities, rather than developing tourism products or destination management strategies. This model positions the BKSDA as the dominant actor without collaboration with village governments, local businesses, or the surrounding community, leaving it at a basic, administrative and reactive management level. There is no comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to measure destination performance in terms of visits, tourist satisfaction, or economic impact, which hinders the development of sustainable and inclusive tourism in accordance with the principles of the UNWTO Destination Management Organization (DMO).

The role of the surrounding community is limited to supporting economic activities such as stalls, parking, and simple facility rentals, without formal structures like Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) or joint forums for aspirations and decision-making. This

top-down approach leaves residents as mere complements, not the primary stakeholders, resulting in uneven distribution of economic benefits and a heavy reliance on agriculture. Nevertheless, there is strong social potential in the form of positive attitudes and community friendliness, which can be leveraged for empowerment purposes such as training local guides, homestays, and culturally and environmentally based tourism products, in line with the principles of community-based tourism (CBT), which emphasizes a sense of ownership.

Tourists consider Talaga Bodas's main attractions to be the beauty of the crater, the cool atmosphere, and the tranquility. However, they highlight the limited facilities, such as toilets, gazebos, seating, and educational information boards, as well as the need for improved access on the steep and slippery paths. Promotion remains weak, relying on personal social media rather than official strategies, creating a gap between expectations and actual experiences. To increase its appeal, management needs to adopt experiential tourism, emphasizing educational experiences over visuals.

Tourism activities have a tangible economic impact through revenue from small businesses and services, as well as awareness of cleanliness, but this impact is not evenly distributed due to low community involvement. Socially, a sense of togetherness is fostered, but conflict risks arise if participation is not broadened. Empowerment strategies through business training, homestays, and the promotion of local products are crucial for inclusive impact.

Key challenges include limited infrastructure, weak coordination between institutions, minimal digital promotion, and a centralized system that hinders innovation. However, significant opportunities exist, with the potential for educational tourism, ecotourism, and conservation as distinctive characteristics. Through collaborative management between the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), local government, the community, and the private sector, Talaga Bodas can become a model for sustainable destinations in West Java. Strengthening the capacity of managers through training, collaborative forums, and digital technology will encourage the transformation from area guardians to destination managers who balance economic, social, and ecological aspects.

IMPLICATION

From an academic perspective, this study adds to the literature on tourism destination management, particularly in the context of natural destinations in developing

countries. The findings suggest that the current centralized management model focused on conservation needs to shift toward a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders. This provides a theoretical contribution to understanding the role of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in Indonesian tourism governance, which differs from models in developed countries. This research also emphasizes the importance of community-based tourism in improving the effectiveness of natural destination management, while paving the way for further research on community empowerment models that are appropriate to local socio-cultural conditions.

For local communities, this study provides empirical evidence to encourage more active participation in tourism destination management. The findings regarding minimal community involvement can serve as a basis for advocacy for the establishment of Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) and a more equitable mechanism for sharing economic benefits. At the national level, these findings align with the Indonesian government's initiative to develop sustainable tourism, as outlined in the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's Strategic Plan. The research findings can be used as a reference by local governments to design natural destination management policies that not only pursue increased tourist visits but also maintain environmental sustainability and the well-being of local residents. The recommended collaborative model can be applied to other natural tourism destinations in Indonesia facing similar challenges.

This study offers insights from a developing country perspective into the barriers to implementing the principles of sustainable tourism development promoted by the UNWTO. The finding that centralized management systems can hinder the progress of sustainable destinations offers lessons for countries in similar situations. The study also demonstrates that the successful management of nature destinations depends not only on their natural beauty but also on the strength of institutions, coordination between stakeholders, and the ability to combine conservation with local economic growth. As such, this study contributes to the global discussion on how nature tourism destinations in developing countries can achieve a balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and social equity in the increasingly competitive era of modern tourism.

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