



Strategies for Local Community Development to Establish Desa Rumah Gerat as a Tourism Village Desa Rumah Gerat, Kecamatan Biru-Biru, Kabupaten Deli Serdang

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Article Info

Article history:

Received November 22, 2024

Approved December 27, 2024

Keywords:

Tourism Village, Community Empowerment, Community Development, SOAR

ABSTRACT

The development of community-based tourism in Rumah Gerat Village, Siburu-Biru District, Deli Serdang Regency, has great potential to drive local economic growth and preserve culture. This study aims to formulate effective strategies for empowering the local community to transform Rumah Gerat into a tourism village. Using the SOAR (Strength, Opportunity, Aspiration, Result) approach, the research analyzes the village's internal strengths, external opportunities, community aspirations, and desired outcomes. The findings show that Rumah Gerat possesses rich natural resources and cultural heritage that serve as key attractions. However, challenges such as a lack of tourism management skills and supporting facilities remain. Therefore, strategies focusing on community empowerment, human resource development, better tourism management, and more intensive promotion are expected to accelerate the village's transformation into a sustainable tourism destination. In conclusion, the development of tourism in Rumah Gerat requires careful planning and active community participation to create tourism that is not only economically beneficial but also socially and environmentally sustainable.

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How to cite: Khadry, M., Manurung, B. K., Ginting, A. I. B., Purba, A. P., Manurung, A. A., Simanjuntak, A. O. P., Ismail, M. (2024) Strategies for Local Community Development to Establish Desa Rumah Gerat as a Tourism Village Desa Rumah Gerat, Kecamatan Biru-Biru, Kabupaten Deli Serdang. *Jurnal Ilmiah Global Education*, 5(4), 2788-2793. <https://doi.org/10.55681/jige.v5i4.3594>

INTRODUCTION

Community-based tourism has become a central approach in developing sustainable tourism villages. This concept emphasizes the importance of active community involvement as key players in planning, managing, and preserving tourism potential. According to Damanik and Pratiwi (2022), tourism development that involves the local community not only provides economic benefits but also preserves the cultural and environmental heritage of the area. Desa Rumah Gerat, located in Siburu-Biru District, Deli Serdang Regency, holds great potential to become a premier tourist destination due to its natural wealth, including pristine rivers, unique

flora, and local cultural practices such as Karo herbal medicine and preserved traditional customs.

However, this potential has yet to be optimally utilized due to various challenges. According to community empowerment theory, as explained by Surya and Nugroho (2021), challenges such as a lack of awareness about tourism, low management skills, and weak solidarity among residents remain the main obstacles to developing the village into a tourism hub. Additionally, social issues like negative habits, insufficient environmental awareness, and inadequate services for tourists also need to be addressed. Thus, a comprehensive and sustainable community development strategy is essential to strengthen the capacity of local people to manage their potential.

One relevant approach in formulating development strategies is SOAR (Strength, Opportunity, Aspiration, Result), as described by Mahmud (2023). This approach focuses on enhancing positive aspects such as strengths and opportunities while channeling the community's energy towards shared aspirations to achieve desired results. In the case of Desa Rumah Gerat, this approach can be used to capitalize on natural and cultural wealth as a main strength, create new economic opportunities through tourism, and align community aspirations towards a successful and sustainable tourism village. Furthermore, tourism development is not only about improving the local economy but also about achieving a balance between economic benefits, environmental preservation, and cultural sustainability. This aligns with the concept of sustainable tourism, as outlined by Suwanto (2022), where successful tourist villages offer authentic experiences while maintaining their local identity. For example, the traditional Karo herbal medicine practices can be a unique attraction, and lemon orchards can be developed into agritourism, with lemon fruits used as ingredients for local food and beverages.

This research aims to formulate a community development strategy based on the SOAR approach to support the development of Desa Rumah Gerat as a tourism village. This strategy is expected to empower the local community to actively engage in tourism management, strengthen community solidarity, and create sustainable economic opportunities. Additionally, this study is expected to contribute both practically and theoretically to the development of community-based tourism in Indonesia. With a focused approach, Desa Rumah Gerat has the potential to become a leading tourism village that not only enhances the welfare of its community but also preserves its culture and environment as key assets in sustainable tourism development.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the potential, challenges, and strategies for community development in transforming Desa Rumah Gerat into a tourism village. The methods used include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and document analysis. Participatory observation is conducted to understand the social and cultural conditions of the village. In-depth interviews will be carried out with stakeholders such as community leaders and local entrepreneurs to gather their perspectives on tourism management. The FGDs aim to identify the community's aspirations and expectations regarding the tourism village. Document analysis will examine the village's development plans and relevant policies. SWOT and SOAR analyses will be applied to formulate strategies based on the village's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as its aspirations and desired outcomes. The collected data will be analyzed thematically to

identify key themes and generate strategic recommendations that are useful for empowering the local community and managing community-based tourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Current Conditions: Strengths and Opportunities of Desa Rumah Gerat

Based on the analysis, Desa Rumah Gerat has several internal strengths that are highly potential in supporting the development of the village as a tourist destination. These strengths can serve as the key assets in achieving the goal of becoming a sustainable tourism village.

Strengths:

- **Human Resources:** The village has a substantial number of people, including young individuals who can be involved in the community-based tourism awareness groups. According to Sudirman (2017), young people play a crucial role in community-based tourism management as they have great potential to innovate and develop the tourism sector. Their involvement can introduce local and traditional values while creating new job opportunities.
- **Natural Resources:** The village boasts rich natural resources, including rivers, unique flora, and a pristine environment. Sutanto (2014) explains that well-preserved and unpolluted natural environments are key attractions for ecotourism. Desa Rumah Gerat has great potential to develop sustainable nature tourism that supports resource conservation.
- **Cultural Traditions:** The village is home to unique Karo herbal medicine traditions, which could serve as a cultural tourism attraction. According to Irawan (2016), managing local cultural heritage is an integral part of community-based tourism development. Preserving and developing local culture not only attracts tourists but also ensures the sustainability of the destination.

Opportunities:

- **New Livelihoods from Tourism:** Sudirman (2018) highlights that the tourism sector can provide additional income for rural communities traditionally dependent on agriculture or other economic activities. This sector creates new business opportunities, such as culinary ventures, accommodations, and handicrafts, contributing to the economic sustainability of the village.
- **Cultural Preservation of Karo Traditions:** Fandeli (2015) emphasizes that cultural tourism benefits both local communities and the international introduction of Indonesia's cultural diversity, simultaneously ensuring its preservation.'
- **Collaboration with Government and Private Sector:** According to the Ministry of Tourism Regulation No. 14 of 2016, developing tourism villages requires collaboration among various stakeholders. Collaborating with local government and private entities can open opportunities for funding and promoting the village, along with improving basic infrastructure.

While the village has significant opportunities, there are challenges that need to be addressed to fully maximize this potential.

2. Future Conditions: Aspirations and Expected Outcomes

Desa Rumah Gerat aspires to become an independent and sustainable tourism village by leveraging its internal strengths and external opportunities. As stated by the UNWTO (2013) in sustainable tourism development principles, tourism destination development should focus on economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Aspirations:

- **Self-Sustaining Tourism Village:** The village aims to become a self-sustaining tourism destination, with active community participation in tourism management. According to Putra (2020), the success of developing a tourism village relies heavily on how much the community participates in managing it. Involving the community directly in planning, development, and management is crucial.
- **Cultural and Traditional Preservation:** Rizki (2019) emphasizes that the preservation of local culture should be prioritized in tourism development. The community must gain a deeper understanding of the importance of culture as a main attraction that can enhance the village's image in the eyes of tourists.

Expected Outcomes:

- **Increased Economic Income:** Sudirman (2017) states that tourism can create new jobs and reduce dependence on the agricultural sector, which may be unstable. The community will benefit from business opportunities in tourism services, local cuisine, accommodations, and regional products.
- **Improved Quality of Life:** Irawan (2016) explains that tourism contributes significantly to improving the quality of life by increasing access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure.
- **Increased Awareness and Participation in Tourism Management:** Fandeli (2015) stresses that community-based tourism management requires the awareness and commitment of the local people to preserve natural and cultural assets, ensuring the sustainability of the tourism destination.

3. Tourism Development Strategy for Desa Rumah Gerat (SOAR)

Based on the SWOT analysis, the tourism development strategy for Desa Rumah Gerat can be outlined using the SOAR approach (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results), which focuses on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and desired outcomes by the community. This approach provides guidance on utilizing existing potentials and external opportunities.

SOAR Strategy:

- **Leverage Internal Strengths:** Utilize local human resources and natural wealth to create tourism products based on nature and culture. Sudirman (2018) mentions that empowering local human resources is key to enhancing the quality of sustainable tourism. Through training and skill development, the community can professionally manage and market tourism products.
- **Maximize External Opportunities:** Collaborate with the government and private sector for funding and promotional support. Ministry of Tourism Regulation No. 14 of 2016 emphasizes the importance of collaboration between local governments, private sectors, and communities to improve the competitiveness of tourism villages

- **Increase Awareness through Training and Education:** Putra (2020) suggests that training based on local potential will improve the community's ability to manage tourism destinations and provide a better experience for tourists.
- **Achieve Desired Outcomes:** The desired outcomes include increased community welfare, preservation of local culture, and the establishment of a sustainable tourism destination. Irawan (2016) notes that sustainable community-based tourism can only be achieved when the community receives economic and social benefits from the sector.

4. Challenges in Tourism Development

Despite the vast potential, Desa Rumah Gerat faces several challenges in developing as a tourism village, including:

- **Limited Education and Skills in Tourism Management:** Sudirman (2017) points out that the lack of skills in tourism can hinder the success of tourism village development. Therefore, continuous training and education for the community are essential.
- **Insufficient Supporting Facilities:** Fandeli (2015) mentions that infrastructure quality is a key factor in tourist comfort and tourism success. The village needs to improve accommodations and road infrastructure to better cater to tourists
- **Low Community Awareness and Initiative:** Sutanto (2014) states that community-based tourism management requires a high level of participation from the community to achieve sustainability goals. The community must take more initiative in tourism management.

5. Strategic Recommendations

Based on this analysis, several strategic recommendations for developing Desa Rumah Gerat as a tourism village include:

- **Enhance Human Resource Capacity:** Provide training on tourism and destination management based on the village's local potential and uniqueness.
- **Develop Basic Infrastructure:** Improve village roads, accommodations, and sanitation facilities to ensure tourists' comfort and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The development of Rumah Gerat Village as a tourist village requires a holistic and well-planned approach, with active participation from the local community. Based on the analysis, there is significant potential in terms of natural resources and culture that can be leveraged to develop community-based tourism. The village's internal strengths, such as human resources capacity and cultural traditions, are key assets in building sustainable tourism.

However, achieving this goal requires capacity building to raise awareness among the community about the importance of cultural preservation, improving skills in tourism management, and strengthening solidarity among the village's sub-districts. The SOAR approach, which identifies Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results, provides an effective strategy for optimizing the village's potential.

With community empowerment, improved supporting facilities, and better promotion, Rumah Gerat Village has the potential to become a leading tourist destination. Strengthening the local community will have a significant impact on improving the economy and ensuring the sustainability of both the environment and the village's culture, creating a tourism model that supports inclusive development and competitiveness.

In conclusion, the development of Rumah Gerat Village as a tourist village requires careful planning, strategies for community empowerment, and enhancing tourism management capacity. Through a synergy of the village's internal strengths and external opportunities, it is hoped that this village can evolve into a tourism destination that is not only economically beneficial but also preserves its culture and environment.

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