

Sustainable Tourism in Sleman, Indonesia: Government Communication Strategy in Empowering Community through the Development of Tourism Village

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Abstract

Changing the community's mindset and empowering them to develop tourism villages was always challenging. It was even more challenging when the development of the tourism village was to adopt a sustainable development approach. The government needed to work together with other stakeholders if this policy was to succeed. This study examined how the Sleman Tourism Agency in Indonesia developed and planned a communication strategy to empower the community by developing tourism villages based on the sustainable development approach. It used qualitative research to understand how the government communicated and empowered the community to develop a sustainable tourism village. Adopting the public relations management process gave a detailed description of the communication strategy. There were four steps that the Sleman Tourism Agency had to follow in developing a communication strategy for community empowerment. Further, this study also identified the stakeholder the government collaborated with through the ABCGM pentahelix model. There was an identification of the role of each relevant stakeholder in developing a tourism village. Finally, this paper argued that the Sleman Tourism Agency initiated a sustainable tourism village program but required communication and collaboration with other stakeholders in its development.

Keywords: sustainable development; sustainable tourism; community empowerment; community participation; tourism village

Introduction

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development first introduced the concept of "sustainable development" in *The Brundtland Report: 'Our Common Future'* in 1987 (WCED, 1987). The report stated sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs" (Hogan & Kelter, 2015; Kutua & Mothibi, 2003). This concept aims to maintain economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment (Griggs et al., 2014). Along with the development of the concept, it has shifted to focus more on economic and social development and environmental protection for the next generations.

Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta Province in Indonesia, had successfully reached its target for 8.5 million foreign and local tourist visits in 2018. Whereas for 2019, the Sleman government targets 10 million foreign and local tourist arrivals to increase by around 2 million compared to the previous year (Pranyoto, 2019). This target has brought some challenges for the Sleman Tourism Agency. They include how to maximize the potential of tourist attractions that can be a superior sector of the community's economy and preserve the natural resource and cultural heritage of local values. This situation was in line with Act No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism. The Act suggested that the wealth of natural resources and historical heritage was a resource and capital for tourism development to increase the prosperity of the people.

One of the crucial factors in developing a tourism village is involving and empowering the community in the tourism development process. Therefore, community participation is essential and should take place continuously. Thus, the challenge for Sleman Government is communicating with various stakeholders, the community in particular, in the development process of a sustainable tourism village. This research focuses on how the government designed the communication strategy to empower the community in the development process of sustainable tourism villages.

Studies on sustainable tourism have focused on the development of the concept and the adoption of the concept in many places. The study on the development of the concept appeared in some works by (Agrawal et al., 2022); Budeanu *et al.* (2016); Dodds (2012); Miller *et al.* (2010); and (Burbano et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the study on the adoption of the concept, for instance, was evident in the work of Băltescu (2018); Hendrayani & Darmastuti (2019); (Ghaisani & Afifi, 2022). Different from these researches, the study on sustainable tourism and communication has been various as shown by Sunuantari (2017); (Buchmann, 2012); and Russo et al. (2016). None, however, has focused on government communication strategy and community empowerment. Thus, the research problem is how the communication strategy of the Sleman Regency Government in empowering the community to develop a tourism

village based on sustainable development principles. This paper argues that the government's ability to communicate with various stakeholders contributed to a more focused development of sustainable tourism villages.

According to Liu (2003), sustainable tourism is a development concept aimed at satisfying the necessity of present tourists and host regions while preserving and increasing opportunities for the future. Meanwhile, World Tourism Organization (WTO) introduced a more recent definition of sustainable tourism as "*Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities*" (World Tourism Organization, 2005). Thus, sustainable tourism development should emphasize that the community needs to evolve and strengthen (Pieterse, 2010). In essence, this concept implies that tourism development is responsive to tourist interest and direct involvement of local communities while emphasizing long-term oriented protection and management efforts. The development and management of resources must meet the economic, social, and aesthetic aspects. It can also maintain the integrity and preservation of ecology, biodiversity, culture, and living systems.

Method

This research adopted a qualitative research method. This study refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions, not their counts or measures. This research focuses on finding answers to why and how a particular phenomenon may occur rather than how often (Berg & Lune, 2012). Qualitative research analyzes data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents. Qualitative researchers engage in naturalistic inquiry, inductively studying real-world settings to generate rich narrative descriptions and construct case studies. Inductive analysis across cases yields patterns and themes, the fruit of qualitative research (Patton, 2005).

This research aimed to analyze how the communication strategy of the Sleman Government in Indonesia in empowering the community through the development of a sustainable tourism village. Various data-gathering techniques used in this research included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, reflective field notes, texts, pictures, photographs, and interactions. Thus, in-depth interviews with the government, in particular, and the community of the tourism village and other relevant stakeholders,

were essential to understanding the communication strategy for empowering the community as part of the Sleman Government policy on tourism.

Concerning data analysis, researchers categorized, labeled, and searched for the meaning of all available data. The results would later become the primary database to organize and report on research findings.

Discussion

Sleman Government Policy on Tourism

Sleman Regency in Indonesia and its diverse natural and cultural wealth are like a two-sided coin, inseparable. Sleman is the only Regency in the Special Region of Yogyakarta that has no boundaries with the sea. However, its location is very close to one of the most active volcanoes, Mount Merapi. Therefore, the area in the south is a fertile lowland, while the northern part is primarily dry land in the form of fields and yards and has a slightly sloping surface to the south, with the northernmost limit being Mount Merapi. This condition has made the land in Sleman Regency geographically fertile. Thus, agriculture and farming become the main livelihoods.

Sleman Regency Tourism Office introduced the 2015-2025 Tourism Development Master Plan to develop regional tourism destinations. This Tourism Master Plan based its regulation on two rules above it. They were Act No. 10 of 2009 concerning National Tourism and Provincial Regulation No. 1 of 2012 concerning the Master Plan for Provincial Tourism Development of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province 2012 – 2025. Article 8 of Act No. 10 of 2009 states that "*tourism development is based on a tourism development master plan consisting of a national tourism development master plan, a provincial tourism development master plan, and a regional tourism development master plan*" (Prakoso, 2019).

The Sleman Master Plan for Regional Tourism Development provides a clear vision, direction, and plan for developing tourism areas already eligible and potential in Sleman Regency. The Master Plan also provides guidance or direction for relevant stakeholders at the central and regional levels, the government, the private sector, and the community, in developing and managing tourism destinations in a directed, targeted, and sustainable manner (Prakoso, 2019). Some essential points of this regulation are the inclusion of tourism village development (chapter 1, article 1, number 19). That tourism development is the responsibility of the local government, business

actors, and the community, and that the development is carried out in an integrated manner (chapter 2, article 6, number 1) (Disparsleman, 2017). The vision of this tourism policy is the realization of the region as a Tourism Destination that is globally competitive, based on the local potential to improve sustainable community welfare.

Meanwhile, one of the strong mission statements is to develop tourism human resources and institutions that are credible, reliable, competent, and professional either in the Regional Government, business actors, and the community and encourage good and efficient regulation to realize sustainable tourism. Thus, the regulation showed the strong willingness of the Sleman Government to adopt the spirit of sustainable development in its tourism development. It is also worth noting that the government had included the development of sustainable tourism villages in its regulation. Chapter 3, part 2, articles 16 and 17, explicitly emphasizes developing tourism villages in the Sleman region and the principles that must be met (Disparsleman, 2017).

A tourism village is a form of integration between attractions, accommodations, and supporting facilities in a community life structure that blends with cultural values and traditions (Prayudi & Ardhanariswari, 2019). At the end of 2013, the Indonesian Tourism Agency introduced the classification of tourism villages. The Tourism Agency classified the tourism villages into very independent, self-contained, developing, and growing categories. According to the Head of Sleman Tourism Agency, 38 tourism villages are spread in 18 districts in Sleman. One very independent tourism village, seven self-contained, eight developing tourism villages, and 15 villages with growing classification. Meanwhile, seven tourism villages must reactivate (Aprita, 2019; Tempo, 2013).

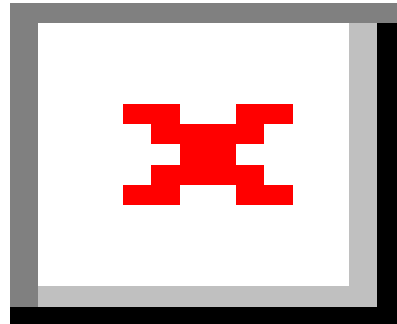


Figure 1. Map of tourism villages in Sleman Regency
Source: (Putra & Fauzy, 2015)

Thus, based on the Tourism Master Plan, the Sleman Tourism Agency determined some ways of developing tourism villages in Sleman as follows:

- a. Develop local attractions, unique and beautiful, covering nature, culture, crafts, and culinary in each tourist village so that they can have distinctive and superior characteristics;
- b. Develop facilities to support attractions in tourist villages to provide increased services for tourists;
- c. Carry out capacity building for village tourism managers to provide excellent service for consumers to extend the length of stay of tourists;
- d. Strengthen tourism attraction management efforts referring to the principle of sustainable development;
- e. Institutional restructuring and activities that drive tourism activities;
- f. Harmonization of tourist attractions adjusted to regional spatial planning.

Although initiated by the government, the development of the tourism village program was the responsibility of many stakeholders. Therefore, cooperation with other stakeholders concerned with the development of tourism in the Sleman Regency was vital. That was why communication strategy was central in this case.

Communication Strategy in Empowering Community

The Sleman Tourism Agency realized the importance of community empowerment if the tourism village development program wanted to succeed. Thus, the challenge was developing a communication strategy to reach the desired outcome of community empowerment. The Sleman Tourism Agency then adopted the Four Steps of Public Relations Process as introduced by Cutlip et al. (2012) in their book on *Effective Public Relations*. The steps of this management process model are as follows:

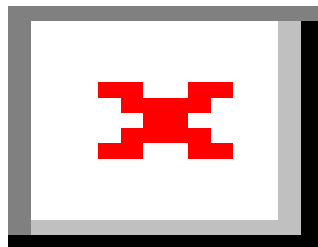


Figure 2 – Four Steps of the Public Relations Process

Source:

1) Defining the problem

The first step is to discuss the knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and behavior of the stakeholders affected or not due by the attitudes and policies of an organization. Problem definition begins with someone or an organization making a value judgment that something is wrong, could soon be, or is better (Cutlip et al., 2012). For example, of many issues identified in developing a sustainable tourism village in Sleman, the Tourism Agency classified and prioritized problems based on the issuance of the Sleman Tourism Masterplan.

There were some reasons why Sleman Tourism Agency included the development of tourism villages based on the sustainable development approach in its

Tourism Masterplan. One of the main reasons was that many areas had tourism potential when viewed from the side of their natural and cultural appeal. However, unfortunately, these areas could not sell or compete with other tourist destinations. This was simply because of the improper packaging of attraction, the low quality of services provided, inadequate interpretation of culture or nature, or because of brand ignorance that might lead to tourists interested in visiting destinations. The crucial issue to this was also how tourism could improve the community's economic condition and introduce the traditions, culture, and life of the village community to tourists. Head of the Sleman Social Service Agency, Sri Murni Rahayu, explained 34,128 poor people in Sleman in 2018. Those who were vulnerable to poverty reached up to 63,462 households (Ermando, 2018). In order to reduce poverty, the Social Service Agency continued to seek community empowerment. The program aimed to enable them to add income independently. One of them was by collaborating with the Tourism Agency through the development of a tourism village program.

Socially, the development of tourism villages provided employment and business fields for the people in the village. Another reason was to inspire people to be environmentally conscious, meaning that people were aware of the significance of conserving and preserving the environment for human life now and in the future.

The Sleman Tourism Agency also identified relevant stakeholders to be involved in developing the tourism village program. To do this, the Tourism Agency adopted the Penta Helix model. The Penta Helix is a socio-economic development model that drives a knowledge economy to pursue innovation and entrepreneurship through collaboration and beneficial partnership among the academe, government, industry, NGOs and public sectors of the society, and the social entrepreneurs (Tonkovic et al., 2015). From the Sleman Government's perspective, a region's development must incorporate participation from all stakeholders. Each stakeholder played a specific yet essential in the process of development as the government itself may lack the capital, capability, and human resources. The synergy and contribution of these stakeholders would benefit the community or villagers. Nevertheless, coordinating and communicating among stakeholders can be a challenge.

This stage was crucial because it helped build the orientation and direction of the overall communication strategy planning process. In principle, this stage prioritizes the processing, research, classification, and compilation of data in such a way as to

facilitate problem-solving later. Research in this data search usually uses interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

2) Planning and Programming

In this stage, the Department of Tourism planned a strategy to overcome the problem. The data collected in the first step became the basis for making decisions about the prepared program strategies, objectives, actions, and communication. This plan should be addressed but must be carefully considered as it determines the success of achieving the overall Tourism Masterplan. Based on the formulation of the problem, a planning and decision-making strategy was made to create a work program based on institutional policies and stakeholders' interests.

The Sleman Tourism Agency set the vision and mission of the Tourism Masterplan as the goal for the communication strategy. Concerning community empowerment, the Tourism Agency conducted community empowerment by (i) increasing the capacity and role of the community in tourism development; (ii) increasing the economic effort of the community in the field of tourism; and (iii) strengthening public awareness of tourism. The Tourism Agency included these goals in Chapter 4 of the Sleman Tourism Development Master Plan.

The Tourism Agency then collaborated with stakeholders to develop sustainable tourism village programs. Specifically, each stakeholder played roles, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Stakeholders' role and communication channel in the tourism village development program

Government	Community	Academic	Business/Private Sector	Media
1.Regulation and support of tourism development 2.Conduct coordination and communication among stakeholders on community empowerment.	1.Provide land for the development of the tourist area. 2.Provide tourist accommodation. 3.Engaging in sustainable tourism development activities. 4.Establish and collect	1. Collaborate with the government in terms of capacity building of villagers through workshops. 2. Consult villagers on how to develop a	1. Involve in the program through CSR 2. Collaborate with government and academe in providing the community with workshops	1. Media spread the news about sustainable tourism destination

3. Collaborate with other stakeholders in developing programs related to tourism village.	retribution to tourism businesses on the utilization of available facilities.	proper sustainable tourism village.	3. Taking tourists to the village	
face-to-face communication, joint stakeholder forum, email	workshop, interactive sustainable tourism program, communication community forum, sustainable tourism program	workshop, face-to-face communication, email, focus group discussion (expert panel), community assistance program	focus group discussion, workshop, meeting forum	fact sheet, information sharing, media visit

In developing community empowerment for sustainable villages, the tourism agency adopted one-way communication and two-way symmetrical communication approaches. One-way communication is linear and limited because it occurs straight from sender to receiver and informs, persuades, or commands. Two-way communication always includes feedback from the receiver to the sender and lets the sender know the message has been received accurately. In two-way communication, there is a negotiation on communication. Both sender and receiver listen to each other, gather information, and are willing to make changes to work together in harmony. They intend to negotiate a mutually satisfactory situation (CESDP, 2019). This study found several communication channels used. They included face-to-face communication, email, workshop, interactive sustainable tourism program, two-way communication community forum, focus group discussion, interpersonal communication, interactive tourist attraction, fact sheet, information sharing, media visit, community assistance program, meeting forum, news media, social media, and event.

The government played a role in making policies and planning the development of tourism villages systematically by communicating with various relevant stakeholders. In particular, engaging the community or villagers was necessary as they were the primary beneficiaries of this tourism village development program. Further, the communication developed between the government and the community was none other than so that development could align with the community's needs, assuming that

the community knew more about the potential in their village (Redyanto et al., 2018; Sulistyarningsih, 2016). The same case was stated by Muallisin (2007) that the community approach became the standard for developing tourism in which involving the community was an essential factor for the success of tourism products. Thus, one way to empower the community is to form a tourism awareness group (*kelompok sadar wisata* or *pokdarwis*) in each village.

Pokdarwis is an institution established by villagers whose members consist of tourism actors who have care and responsibility and act as drivers to create a climate conducive to tourism development in the village area. *Pokdarwis* moves independently means that the development of tourism in the village comes from the village's power with all its potentials. *Pokdarwis* also independently builds itself, which means creating development based on the potential of their creativity because they have the power to develop the village with all the resources they have (Berdesa, 2018). The establishment of *Pokdarwis* in villages in Sleman had been a condition if villages wanted to develop into tourism villages. It eased the process of community empowerment. All communication, either in information, collaboration, participation, and empowerment from stakeholders, can go through this group.

In collaboration with other stakeholders, the private sector had a role in providing tourism support facilities. Tourism requires many supporting facilities such as restaurants, accommodation, travel agencies, transportation, and others (Yoeti, 1996). Thus, the Tourism Agency must collaborate with travel agents, hotels, and other private sectors. In recent years, companies located in Sleman had policies on contributing to regional development through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. The government then directed and suggested that some of the CSR programs focus on developing local tourism. An example of this was creating a CSR program called "one hotel, one village."

Meanwhile, academics helped the government in the process of community empowerment through the capacity building of villagers. Some workshops included customer service, tourism village management, unique village-based attractions, and event management. At the same time, the academe also consulted the private sector on what program best suited the tourism village.

The media played a role in marketing the attraction and tourism destination itself. On the special edition, the media provided space in daily newspapers and time slots in radio and television programs portraying the profile of tourism villages.

In sum, increasing the capacity and role of the community in tourism development was done by improving the capacity of human resources and increasing community involvement in tourism development. Increasing the commercial business of the people in the field of tourism was done by increasing the quality of tourism products and increasing the accessibility of marketing tourism products. The government also sought to strengthen public tourism awareness by increasing understanding and community participation in realizing seven charms: security, order, cleanliness, coolness, beauty, hospitality, and memories.

3) Communication

Based on strategic planning that has been prepared and approved, the implementation of action and communication programs designed for specific targets for each stakeholder is carried out to achieve the program objectives. Therefore, program implementation requires planned communication skills. That says the program developed at the strategy formulation stage must be communicated to all stakeholders (Prayudi, 2012).

One of the biggest challenges in the communication process of empowering the community was understanding the community or villagers of principles of sustainable tourism village. Nonetheless, with Sleman registered as one of 18 international tourism destinations with UNWTO, the Sleman Tourism Agency seriously developed its tourism based on sustainable development. Head of Sleman Tourism Agency, Sudarningsih, said, "A well-maintained environment is a good tourism asset and would be able to invite more tourists. The main principle of tourism development is sustainability. The maintained environment is an asset for tourism to bring tourists." She also explained that tourism was the most minor sector causing environmental damage (Utantoro, 2018). This indicated how the Sleman Government seriously employed the principle of sustainable development in its tourism village development program.

Issues that needed the attention of the ABCGM forum were how to include local values and traditions in the attraction available in the tourism village. Messages

designed for each stakeholder are ensured to support the achievement of program goals and objectives and the interests of each stakeholder.

4) Evaluation

The final step involves assessing the preparation, implementation, and results of the program implementation. Changes made throughout the program's execution were determined by analyzing whether the program performed as planned or not. In addition, the Tourism Agency often held focus groups with essential stakeholders to determine if the communication approach for empowering the community via the construction of a tourism village was practical. Things evaluated were related to the input, output, and outcome of implementing communication strategies. For example, from the input side, the assessment examined whether the stated objectives had answered the problems and whether the identification of stakeholders with the ABCGM model was appropriate. In terms of output, it related to how many tourist villages could be encouraged to apply the principles of sustainable development. Also, there was a need to evaluate the role of stakeholders in helping the government develop sustainable tourism villages. Finally, the evaluation also looked at how the impact of the development of sustainable tourism villages could boost the economic value of the villagers. At the same time, it also introduced local values and traditions and how the program could protect and maintain the natural environment for generations to come.

In general, the Sleman Tourism Agency had planned the development of tourism villages based on principles of sustainable development. The issuance of the 2015-2025 Tourism Development Master Plan was the evidence. This Master Plan explicitly stated the importance of the development of tourism villages in some chapters. Interestingly, this regulation also adopted the principle of sustainable development. The Tourism Master Plan described this in Chapter 2, articles 8 and 11, verse 1 point a. The inclusion of Sleman as an international destination listed in UNWTO had become another piece of evidence. There was an emphasis from the government that tourism development in Sleman Regency must increase the people's economy, bring up the values and traditions of local communities, and preserve the environment. These facts indicated that the Sleman government had seriously paid attention to sustainable development issues in tourism development in the region.

The communication strategy in empowering the community in the process of tourism village development had been remarkable and yet challenging. It was exciting how the Sleman Tourism Agency communicated and collaborated with other stakeholders, as proposed in the ABCGM Penta Helix Model. Each stakeholder played a different and significant role in the development process. The challenge was how the Tourism Agency could synergize all stakeholders to create suitable programs for tourism village development. At the same time, how the proposed program followed stages in community empowerment that included information, consultation, participation, and empowerment. Thus, the communication strategy for community empowerment in the tourism village development program was not linear, although the Tourism Agency adopted a one-way communication approach for some instances. Instead, it was a continuous process that may last for a certain period until the goal was reached.

However, there were some things that the government needed to pay attention to assure the success of the tourism village development program. First, the seriousness of the Sleman Government to sustainable tourism village development must be in line with the improvement of the capability of the staff of the Tourism Agency. Based on the interview with the former Head of Sleman Tourism Agency, the Agency lacked the staff to implement all policies stated in the 2015-2025 Tourism Master Plan. Further, the staff also needed more capability to accompany and monitor the policy implementation. This issue might lead to the slow development of tourism villages. This was evident with many tourism villages that were still in the growing classification. One way to solve this problem was by collaborating with other stakeholders like the academic and private sectors.

Secondly, the government needed to understand that the communication strategy for community empowerment was just the early step in an overall communication strategy for the tourism village development program. Brand, marketing communication, and brand relationship strategies were part of an overall communication strategy. Thus, the government needed to maintain and get support from stakeholders in developing this overall strategy going forward.

In sum, Communication strategies were essential in developing sustainable tourism villages to reach the vision that is to be achieved. The crucial issue in developing tourism villages in Sleman was how the community that would manage

tourist villages could understand sustainable development principles and adopt them in tourism village management.

Communication strategies must be part of the Sleman Regency tourism development policy. Policies that cannot be well communicated are challenging to achieve optimal goals. Therefore, developing the strategy must align with the tourism agency's ability to identify appropriate approaches and channels of communication.

The success of developing tourism destinations also depends on the government's ability to communicate with various stakeholders. Each stakeholder has a different communication role and level of participation. There are at least four levels of stakeholder communication involvement: information, consultation, participation, and empowerment. This still needs further exploration so that tourism communication strategies run well.

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