

Capacity Building for the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*) in Edu-Tourism Village Through the “Integrated Thematic Green Rural Development Model” in the Gunung Kawi Religious Tourism Area, East Java

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Abstract

The development of green rural tourism that offers the advantages of the natural environment and local culture is an interesting trend so that through the community service program, it is expected to build awareness and increase the technical capacity of tourism managers in maintaining environmental sustainability so that the tourism sector remains sustainable and competitive. The location of the community service is in Sumberdem Village, which is the area in the Wonosasi Sub-district in the Gunung Kawi region. The approach used was the initiation model in the form of integrated green rural development through the stages of needs identification, analysis, introduction of ideas, training, demonstration, and evaluation. Data collection on the success of the program was conducted through a closed questionnaire to obtain structured answers and interviews to explore more in-depth information related to the impact and effectiveness of the program. This program has produced a green tourism management model guidebook, which contains an introduction to green tourism, prerequisites for managers, implementation of SOPs, and good practices. The results of the post-training evaluation questionnaire showed an increase in the capacity of Pokdarwis administrators and members, especially those related to insight development, environmental awareness, and visitor management skills.

Keywords: *edu-tourism, Gunung Kawi, Pokdarwis, Sumberdem Village*

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Introduction

The development of the tourism sector in rural areas that utilizes the potential of nature and local culture is one trend that is increasingly attracting attention. Green rural tourism combines elements of natural beauty, cultural uniqueness, and local wisdom, creating a unique attraction for tourists while strengthening local identity. According to a study by Lane and Kastenhol (2015), green rural tourism can have a positive economic impact on local communities but also requires careful planning to maintain a balance between development and sustainability. The study suggests that while green rural tourism can bring economic benefits to local communities, it also necessitates thorough planning to ensure that tourism development does not harm the environment or disrupt the local way of life.

Sumberdem Village, located in Wonosari Subdistrict, Malang Regency, is recognized as one of the religious tourism destinations in the Gunung Kawi region. Sumberdem Village has its own charm through a combination of spiritual values and cultural wealth as well as its natural environment. This is due to the combination of rich spiritual values and diverse cultural wealth as well as its beautiful natural environment. In the framework of increasing the capacity for the tourism awareness group in an edu-tourism village through the "Integrated Thematic Green Rural Development Model" (ITGRaD), Sumberdem Village is developed as a tourist destination that is not only oriented towards exploring natural beauty but also building active community involvement in its management and preservation. This model focuses on a holistic approach that integrates ecological, social, and economic aspects to create a sustainable tourist village. This model is relevant to the concept of the thematic village which has a distinctive identity as a public place that can be used as a characterized tourist destination (Bahar & Haliza, 2023). In this model, the development of rural areas is carried out in an integrated manner, by integrating aspects of green environment, sustainability, and the utilization of distinctive local potential. In addition to these features, Sumberdem Village boasts five thematic hamlets that serve as its highlights: Coffee Hamlet, Sustainable Eating Place Hamlet (*KRPL*) and Herbal Medicine Hamlet, Lemon Hamlet, Livestock Hamlet, and Rosella Hamlet. Although there are several other thematic hamlets, the focus of the ITGRaD model activities is on the hamlets as mentioned above.

The main uniqueness of Sumberdem Village as an edu-tourism village lies in the integration of education-based tourism, ecotourism, and environmental conservation in one area. The ITGRaD concept applied in this village not only prioritizes tourism as an economic sector, but also as a means of education for visitors related to nature conservation, local culture, and sustainable agriculture and livestock practices. In addition, Sumberdem Village has a community that is active in developing local wisdom-based tourism. Through the role of a tourism awareness group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata*, abbreviated as *POKDARWIS* in Indonesian), the community is directly involved in creating various attractions and tourism services that support sustainability values.



Fig. 1. Featured product of thematic village, coffee powder from coffee hamlet

This aligns with the concept of community-based tourism, which emphasizes the importance of local participation in managing cultural and natural resources. In this concept, local communities play an active role in developing and managing tourism in their area, ensuring

that tourism development not only provides economic benefits but also preserves their cultural heritage and natural environment (Santoso et al., 2022). The unique attractions offered at Sumberdem thematic village are educational tours of agriculture and animal husbandry. Visitors can learn first-hand about organic farming practices, as well as environmentally friendly animal husbandry, as well as ecotourism, and environmental conservation through natural springs that are maintained by the community. This program is attractive for families, students, and tourists who want to understand the village's agricultural ecosystem in more detail.



Fig. 2. FGD and information dissemination by the community service team in Sumberdem Village

With the increasing number of tourists, challenges related to environmental preservation and natural resource management have emerged. The lack of public understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism is an obstacle to implementing environmentally friendly practices. There are still many tourism managers who do not have the adequate technical capacity to manage waste, water conservation, and maintain the balance of local ecosystems. Research conducted by Dodds and Butler (2010) indicates that an increase in tourist visits without proper management can have negative impacts on the environment, such as increased pollution,

habitat destruction, and loss of biodiversity. Therefore, integrated environmental interventions are needed to ensure sustainable tourism management.

A comprehensive approach, combining tourism management with sustainability and environmental conservation principles (Aini & Winarno, 2022) aligns with the ITGRaD model. This model emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral coordination and active participation of local communities to maintain a balance between economic development and nature conservation. Through the ITGRaD model approach, the *POKDARWIS* in the edu-tourism village is expected to enhance their capacity for professional tourism management while contributing to environmental preservation efforts. The term "integrated" refers to a holistic approach that combines various aspects of rural development, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors, into a coherent strategy. Meanwhile, "thematic" focuses on green rural development, prioritizing environmental sustainability and eco-friendliness. Green rural development aims to promote ecotourism and conserve natural resources, emphasizing the importance of environmentally conscious and sustainable rural development.



Fig 3. Discussion among the village head, *BUMDES*, *POKDARWIS*, and the community service team

The ITGRaD model empowers local communities to take an active role in managing and developing natural resources, allowing residents to benefit from tourism activities while preserving their environment and culture. Therefore, this community service activity provides significant benefits for tourism sites and local communities by encouraging sustainability-based tourism management. Through increased technical capacity and awareness of environmental conservation, the community can more effectively develop the village's tourism potential without damaging the ecosystem. In addition, this activity strengthens the skills of tourism managers in destination management, tourist services, and marketing strategies, which ultimately increases tourist attractiveness and provides positive economic impacts for local communities. With the synergy between residents and stakeholders, the village can develop as a competitive and sustainable tourism destination.

In one of the sustainable eating place promotion initiatives in a thematic village, agricultural practices are designed to be sustainable and reduce environmental impacts, such as organic farming. Therefore, cultural preservation within the ITGRaD concept involves safeguarding local culture and traditions, including religious and spiritual practices, and promoting their integration into tourism activities. By adopting the ITGRaD model, the green edu-tourism village supporting the Gunung Kawi religious tourism region in Malang, East Java, can accelerate its development while ensuring that the growth remains sustainable.

The development of tourist villages requires support from human resources with knowledge and expertise in the field of tourism. According to Pajriah (2018), human resources play a crucial role in tourism development. Tourism human resources include tourists, workers, and all individuals who support tourism activities by providing services to satisfy tourists and contributing positively to the economy (Setiawan, 2016). The success of tourism development depends on the quantity and quality of the human resources involved. The increasing demand for professionalism in the workforce, not only among individuals but also across regions, makes the development of human resources in the tourism sector a crucial and strategic effort. The presence of competent human resources can drive and advance tourism activities in tourist areas (Sani & Anam, 2022). Therefore, there is a need to improve the quality and capability of human resources in tourist villages.



Fig 4. Location of Sumberdem Village in Malang Regency

The community service program (*Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* or *PkM* in Indonesian) implemented in Sumberdem Village aims to build awareness and increase the technical capacity of tourism managers in maintaining environmental sustainability so that the tourism sector remains sustainable and competitive. Research conducted by Simanihuruk et al. (2023) indicates that training and capacity building for the local community in sustainable tourism management can improve economic well-being as well as cultural and environmental preservation. Through this program, it is expected that tourism managers will be able to optimally implement environmentally conscious tourism development strategies, ultimately having a positive impact on the village community and the natural environment in the Mount Kawi region. The approach used in this study refers to the ITGRaD (Integrated Tourism Governance for Rural Development) model, which emphasises the integration of community-based tourism governance to support sustainable rural development. This model combines aspects of governance, community participation, and local resource utilization in village tourism management. To understand the conditions and needs of the community, a survey of villagers was conducted to identify their interests, challenges, and expectations for tourism management. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders, such as the village government and tourism activists, to gain insight into policies, strategies, and potential for tourism development based on the environment and local culture.

Methods

The outlined approach serves as a comprehensive framework for the development and implementation of effective solutions within the theme of the community service program. The approach employed is in the form of “Integrated Green Rural Development” through stages of needs identification, analysis, idea introduction, training, demonstration, and evaluation.

01 Identify needs	02 Analysis	03 Introduction of Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing the current situation Determining the gap between existing and desired conditions Setting the goal to be achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting relevant data Examine factors affecting the situation Identifying constraints and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new ideas to address the problem Considering alternative solutions Selecting the most promising idea
04 Training	05 Demonstration	06 Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design an appropriate training program Prepare the necessary materials and resources Conduct training to equip participants with the required knowledge and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the application of ideas in real situations Provide concrete examples of how to implement solutions Facilitate hands-on practice by participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measuring implementation effectiveness Analyze results achieved Identify areas that require improvement Provide feedback for process improvement

Fig. 5. Approach using the initiation model

Beginning with needs identification, the initiation model approach ensures that the issues at hand are well understood and that the objectives to be achieved are clearly defined. The analysis phase allows for a deep understanding of the situation, including factors influencing it and potential constraints or opportunities. The introduction of ideas fosters creativity and innovation in finding solutions, while the training phase ensures that all stakeholders involved possess the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the solutions.

Demonstration and evaluation are critical stages in this approach. Demonstration provides an opportunity to observe how the solutions function in practice, allowing for adjustments and improvements prior to full implementation. Evaluation, as the final stage, ensures that the

effectiveness of the solutions can be measured and areas for improvement can be identified. A continuous evaluation process allows for ongoing refinement, ensuring that the solutions remain relevant and effective in responding to changing conditions or needs. This systematic approach not only facilitates the development of targeted solutions but also promotes continuous learning and improvement within the organization or context in which the solutions are applied (Renjaan et al., 2023).

The community service activities were conducted by a team of lecturers from various fields of expertise from Universitas Negeri Malang and Universitas Merdeka Malang, in collaboration with students from different departments and local community leaders who have significant influence and a deep understanding of local conditions. The activities took place in Sumberdem Village, a village located at the foothill of Mount Kawi in Malang Regency. The village still faces various socio-economic challenges that require the empowerment of human resources to manage the thematic village education tourism. The approach used in this activity is the initiation model, which serves as a framework guiding the initial stages of community service activities to ensure successful and sustainable implementation.

Data collection to assess the success of the program was conducted through two main methods, a closed questionnaire and interviews given to 15 Sumberdem villagers involved in the village tourism sector, including local tourism managers, homestay entrepreneurs, tour guides, and people who plan to develop tourism-related businesses. The two methods complemented each other in obtaining more comprehensive and valid data. A closed-ended questionnaire was used to obtain structured and quantitative answers regarding respondents' opinions on various aspects of the program. The questions asked related to how much the community was satisfied with the training provided or how much they felt the program had an impact on their ability to manage tourist destinations. This closed-ended questionnaire allowed the research team to collect data that could be generalized and made it easier to identify common patterns or trends. Aspects asked in the questionnaire were about interest in tourism management, skills possessed and needed, training and development needs, and village government support.

In addition to the closed-ended questionnaire, interviews were conducted to gain more in-depth information on the impact and effectiveness of the program. As respondents, interviews were conducted with tourism managers who are members of *POKDARWIS* because they are related to tourism management. Through interviews, the implementation team was able to gain a richer and more contextualized understanding of the experiences, views, and challenges faced by community members. The interviews also provided space for community members to express things that could not be captured through closed questions, such as difficulties in implementing the training or expectations that had not been achieved. Aspects of the interviews included challenges in tourism management, training and mentoring needs, and sustainability of green rural tourism.

In the process, the community service team and the village community jointly conducted a series of activities, including identifying key issues faced by the community through focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews, planning effective and context-appropriate solutions through participatory workshops, and implementing concrete actions to address existing problems in the form of partnerships and community empowerment. The primary goal of these activities is to achieve sustainable community empowerment, with a focus on enhancing community capacity in managing local resources, developing creative economy initiatives based on village potential, strengthening community institutions, and implementing pilot projects to test and refine approaches, identify challenges, and develop solutions. Through this collaborative approach, it is hoped that the Sumberdem Village community will be able to build the capacity and independence needed to deal with challenges and seize opportunities for sustainable welfare improvement.

Results and Discussions

The implementation of this community service activity follows stages of needs identification, analysis, idea introduction, training, demonstration, and evaluation. The target outcomes for the community service activities are based on the partner's issues in terms of institutional structure and managerial capacity.

Results

The analysis of the partner's existing conditions, based on identified issues, revealed challenges in the tourism sector, including institutional aspects, management aspects, and supporting tourism products. Institutionally, the problems faced by the partners include the *POKDARWIS* of the thematic village lacking organizational strength, the *POKJA* (working groups) not being institutionalized, weak inter-institutional collaboration, and the suboptimal functioning of the *BUMDES* (village-owned enterprises). To accelerate the development of Sumberdem Edu-Tourism Village in Malang Regency, it is necessary to seek solutions to the regional issues from the perspectives of tourism and the environment. Given the region's diverse local potential and the importance of potential-based area mapping, community empowerment is essential to foster the community's self-reliance and welfare by enhancing knowledge, attitudes, skills, resource utilization, and providing support that aligns with the prioritized needs of the village community.

Such regional potential requires specific efforts to make it beneficial for the community. The situational analysis indicates that many of the village's local potentials can be further developed. Potential, in the context of edu-tourism village acceleration, does not only refer to human resources but also includes other entities, such as regional potential, tourism potential, and so on. The identification of village potential conducted by the community service implementation team is an effort to assess the entirety of available resources, including natural resources, human resources, and social resources. Therefore, the community service activities were designed to develop a thematic village strategy in Sumberdem Village, in terms of (a) institutional governance and (b) strengthening management for the acceleration of Sumberdem Edu-Tourism Village, synchronized with village planning based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This aims to achieve sustainable village development that is distinctive and rooted in local wisdom.

According to Aini and Winarno (2022), business capabilities and opportunities for improving community welfare must be specifically developed so that institutional aspects and business development can be established and empowered. The various solutions proposed in the community service activities have specific target outcomes for each indicator. The following outlines the aspects, solutions, and measurable target outcomes.

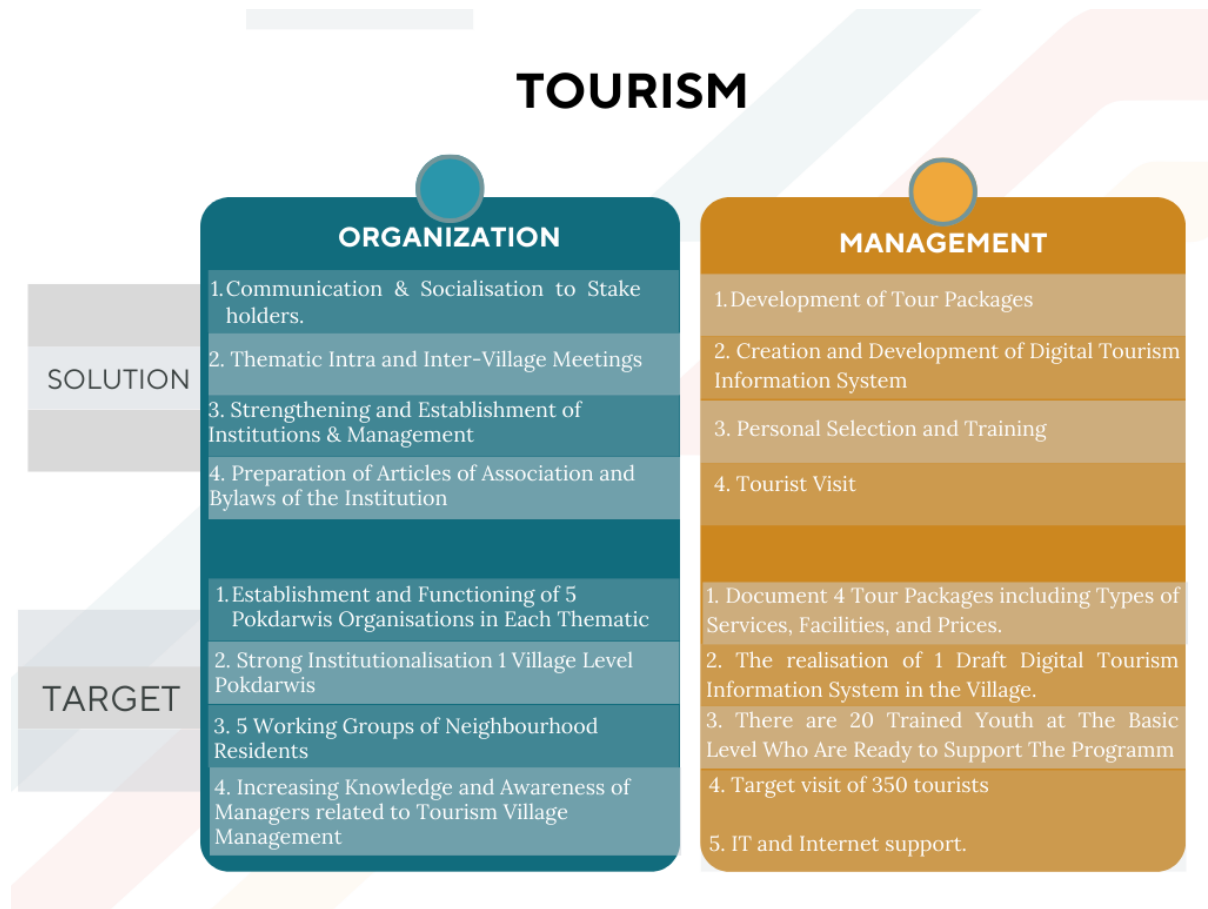


Fig. 6. Solutions and targets

The strategic role and function of the tourism awareness group, *POKDARWIS*, in supporting tourism management activities in Sumberdem Village focus on monitoring and mediation to ensure community participation in all stages of tourism development, from planning to implementation. The local community possesses deeper knowledge of the area's conditions, including its potential, problems, and needs that arise along with tourism development. Therefore, to optimize the performance of *POKDARWIS*, it is necessary to establish a clear organizational structure to avoid overlapping responsibilities. Mapping human resources based on individual competencies is a crucial task for the authorities involved in the development of the thematic village in Sumberdem Village.

In an organization, human resources are a key factor in achieving its goals. Due to their strategic role, human resources need to be managed effectively and efficiently to attain optimal results (Pajriah, 2018). As part of the formation of *POKDARWIS* and the strengthening of institutional capacity, tourism awareness motivators and the *Sapta Pesona* principles are needed in the tourism area to enhance tourism understanding (Setiawan, 2022).

In line with the goal of establishing five thematic hamlets, the outcomes are strengthened through the respective *POKDARWIS* teams in each thematic hamlet. The formation of five *POKDARWIS* organizations in these thematic hamlets requires the development of tourism attractions, amenities (such as identifying homestays), and accessibility that can be enjoyed by tourists. To strengthen the *POKDARWIS* institutions, the training provided included the *Sapta Pesona* training. For sustainability, additional training is needed for the *POKDARWIS* of Sumberdem Village's thematic hamlets including village tourism management and homestay management training.



Fig. 7. Resource person provided training of the *Sapta Pesona* program for the *POKDARWIS*

As part of the evaluation, the implementation team distributed questionnaires to residents, focusing on the variables of skill enhancement and tourism management training. The questionnaire results in Table 1 below show that the majority of Sumberdem villagers have a high interest in improving skills in tourism management, as well as expectations from villagers in the provision of sustainable training programs.

Table 1. Respondents ‘Questionnaire

No.	Question	Percentage of Respondents (%)
1.	Villager have a high interest in improving skills in tourism management	85%
2.	Villagers want to attend specialised training in tourism (destination management, tourist services, tourism marketing).	85%
3.	Villagers expect the village government to provide continuous training programmes.	>70%
4.	Villagers emphasise the need for structured and regular training.	>70%
5.	Villagers want technical guidance and mentoring from a team of tourism experts.	>70%
6.	Villagers are ready to play an active role in developing the tourism potential of the village.	>70%

The table shows the high enthusiasm of Sumberdem villagers in improving their skills and managing tourism potential in the area. With support from the village government and experts, sustainable training programs can help residents develop the tourism sector in a more professional and competitive manner. A total of 85 percent of respondents expressed a strong desire to attend specialized training that could improve their skills in tourism, such as destination management, tourist services, and tourism marketing. This statement shows that villagers realize the importance of having adequate skills to support tourism development in their area.

Furthermore, over 70% of respondents expressed hope that the village government would provide ongoing training programs. Residents emphasized the need for training that is not a one-time event but rather structured and conducted periodically, enabling their skills to evolve in line with the dynamic demands of the tourism industry. They also sought technical guidance and mentorship from experts in the field of tourism to ensure that the knowledge they acquire can be effectively applied to manage village tourism. The findings indicate the enthusiasm of Sumberdem Village residents to actively participate in developing their local tourism potential. With synergy between the residents and the village government, it is expected that Sumberdem can become an attractive tourist destination, positively impacting the local economy.

The results of interviews that have been conducted with village officials and community members related to the insights obtained the results of the need for further training in the management of tourist destinations. A person from the tourism management team who are member of *POKDARWIS*, Taufik, stated, "Training on marketing and tourist services is very

important because we want this village to be widely known as a unique destination.”. Supporting the *POKDARWIS* team's statement, Sumberdem Village Head, Purwati, S.E., stated, “Specifically for this year's activities, I hope that the development of human resources, as well as the arrangement of the thematic village environment and its management, will be a priority and we villagers will be happy to jointly realize the program in accordance with the stages prepared by the activity implementation team.”. Several statements from other villagers emphasized awareness of the importance of a sustainable approach to tourism development, which provides long-term benefits for the community. The statements from the village and villagers illustrate a range of perspectives and reflect the importance of training and awareness of villagers in managing thematic villages as sustainable tourism destinations that benefit the local economy.

The community service program themed "Integrated Thematic Green Rural Development" has had a significant impact on enhancing the capacity of Sumberdem Village residents to sustainably manage green tourism. Through a series of training sessions and workshops, the community has been equipped with knowledge and skills related to environmentally-based tourism management practices, and introduced to the concept of eco-friendly tourism, including organic farming practices (thematic village KRPL – Sustainable Eating Place Area) that support agro-tourism (Setiawan, 2023). To ensure that the activities serve as a tangible guide for tourism management, the community service team has produced a model handbook for green tourism management, which includes an introduction to green tourism, prerequisites for managers, implementation of standard operating procedures, and best practices.

Discussions

Gathering baseline information on the challenges faced by the communities, such as limited skills in managing tourist destinations or lack of knowledge on environmental management resulted in a reflection of the actual conditions on the ground. Most residents felt that they lacked the necessary technical and managerial skills. Based on the results of the questionnaire focusing on the tourism management capacity building variable, evaluating the main indicators, such as the ability to manage tourism resources, promote village attractions, sustainable utilization of resources, collaboration in the management team, and development of creative tourism products. The villagers reported socio-economic benefits from tourism development, including job creation, the establishment of new businesses, and infrastructure

improvements. However, tourism activities also identified a decline in environmental quality as a consequence of tourism development. These findings underscore the importance of maintaining a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability in the context of sustainable tourism development (Raharjana & Putra, 2020).

A literature review on the role of communities in tourism development provides valuable insights. The results obtained from the community service activities support the notion that long-term planning, active community participation, and environmental sustainability significantly influence support for tourism, as well as the positive and negative impacts experienced (Windarsari et al., 2021). The main problem identified was the lack of training and ongoing support in environmentally friendly tourism management. Residents have a high desire to learn, but still lack access to relevant training. Therefore, there is a need for more community-based approaches in designing community service programmes that focus on direct community involvement in problem identification. This can increase the relevance of the solutions offered.

The results of the questionnaire on tourism management training also highlighted several important aspects, including involvement in planning. This aspect demonstrated that residents were engaged from the outset in identifying the potential for tourism development in Sumberdem Village. This was evident through participation in dialogues aimed at identifying issues related to tourism development, including social and cultural aspects. The thematic *POKDARWIS* team also participated in needs analysis and the mechanisms for developing village tourism. Community involvement in determining the design of programs and facilities aligns with the statement of Wesnawa (2022), regarding the necessity to consider local needs and tourism market potential. From the perspective of tourism training, the community assessed that the training materials were relevant to their needs and the local context of Sumberdem Village. Case studies, simulations, and interactive discussions were employed in the capacity-building activities of *POKDARWIS*, supplemented by concrete examples relevant to the local context.

A well-structured training program enables participants from the thematic *POKDARWIS* to absorb information progressively and apply it during practical sessions. This training not only enhances theoretical knowledge but also boosts participants' confidence in implementing new

skills in tourism management. Furthermore, the training materials included the latest trends in the tourism industry, assisting participants in anticipating future changes and opportunities (Aini, 2023). This capacity enhancement focuses not only on technical aspects but also on managerial ones, such as destination management, digital marketing, and improving service quality for tourists (Deiss & Henneberry, 2020). These activities aim to empower the community to not only maintain environmental sustainability but also develop local economic potential independently and creatively. With these new skills, the community is expected to create unique and competitive tourism experiences that ultimately enhance their economic well-being.

Conclusion

The implementation of the program with the target of institutional effectiveness and capacity building of organized managers of *POKDARWIS* has succeeded in building shared awareness among villagers, as well as institutional revitalization. There is an understanding and awareness of the importance of maintaining a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. The approach used in this activity is to implement Integrated Thematic Green Rural Development (ITGRaD) which integrates green environmental management and sustainability in every aspect of village tourism management. The ITGRaD program involves intensive training and ongoing mentoring, involving experts to provide technical insights to the community regarding the management of environmentally friendly tourist destinations. The results of the community service implementation showed a significant improvement in the tourism management skills of the village community. Most of the villagers showed high interest in participating in the training and felt more prepared to manage tourist destinations with a sustainable approach. In addition, the enthusiasm to preserve the environment is also increasing, with the hope that there will be continuous training that can update residents' knowledge regularly. The results of this activity have a positive impact on the sustainability of the next program implementation with the formation of collective community awareness in maintaining ecological and economic balance, as well as strengthening the institutional capacity of *POKDARWIS* which encourages sustainable green tourism management and opens economic opportunities for local SMEs. The recommendations for future activities are to improve access to more adequate and flexible training facilities, develop a sustainable mentoring system after training to ensure the skills acquired can be applied effectively, and

expand the service program by involving more related parties, such as village governments and the private sector, to support tourism development more comprehensively.

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