
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM STRATEGY IN MEAT TOURISM VILLAGE, TOBA REGENCY, NORTH SUMATRA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the sustainability of community-based tourism (CBT) in Meat Village, Toba Regency, North Sumatra, with a focus on empowering local communities, especially in decision-making and tourism management. The research aims to assess the current state of CBT in the village and develop strategies to ensure its long-term sustainability. A mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques, was employed, using questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) for sustainability analysis. The study found that while the community is involved in tourism activities, their participation in decision-making and planning is limited. Key findings include the importance of enhancing women's empowerment, improving community involvement in decision-making, and strengthening the role of traditional leaders in conflict resolution. The research emphasizes the need for continuous capacity building and decentralization of tourism management to ensure equitable benefits and preserve cultural heritage. The implications of this study suggest that promoting inclusive governance and providing education and training to local communities can improve the sustainability of CBT, leading to more resilient and culturally sensitive tourism development in rural areas like Meat Village.

KEYWORDS *Community Based Tourism, Tourism Village, Sustainable Tourism*



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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a sector that plays an important role in improving the economic well-being of communities. In order for the tourism sector to operate sustainably, tourism development must be carried out by applying the concept of CBT or Community-Based Tourism (Flores & Río, 2024; Mahato et al., 2021; Rahmatika & Suman, 2020; Sarabia-Molina et al., 2022; Siakwah & Musavengane,

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2021). However, sustainability cannot rely solely on planning—it requires commitment from all parties to maintain it. Sustainable tourism must consider ecological aspects, sustainable economic development, and the preservation of cultural continuity. This is crucial because culture is one of the key resources in the development of the tourism sector (Leite & Lousada, 2022; Mayaka et al., 2019; Mendoza-Moheno et al., 2021; Singcram, 2021; Siraphatthada et al., 2022).

According to the tourism development roadmap, by 2020 all super-priority tourism destinations were expected to have completed all necessary supporting infrastructure. This includes the Lake Toba area, which has a highly complex infrastructure plan. The presence of this national strategic program has led to increased investment in the Lake Toba region, including the development of roads, airports, accommodations, and other facilities. Such programs should involve local residents so that they can benefit from the initiative and not merely serve as passive objects. As a result, the investments made are expected to benefit not only tourism operators or investors but also the local communities.

Previous studies have classified the impacts of tourism into several areas: (a) impact on income, (b) impact on employment, (c) impact on community social activities, (d) impact on knowledge, (e) impact on culture and local customs, and (f) impact on institutions and physical infrastructure (Oktaviani & Yuliani, 2023). The impacts of tourism development directly influence the policies needed to support sustainable tourism development (Surahman et al., 2021). Sustainability in tourism can be assessed through economic, environmental, and social aspects (Permatasari, 2022). Achieving sustainability in the social aspect of tourism programs requires active participation from the community. Social aspects can be measured through social values, social structures, participation, and social conflict. To meet the needs of tourists, collaboration among various parties is required, including local communities, national and regional governments, and tourism entrepreneurs. The local community plays a crucial role, particularly in developing the tourism industry. However, a recurring issue is that tourism development often does not focus on sustainability.

The village of Meat has been included in the National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN) as designated by the Ministry of Tourism. This village is recognized as a tourism destination with natural and cultural potential. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Tourism and Creative Economy Agency (Kemenparekraf/Baparekraf) is now not only focused on increasing tourist arrival numbers in Indonesia but is also committed to promoting sustainable tourism across the country. Based on this context, it is important to examine the extent of the community's role in Meat village (CBT) in realizing sustainable tourism.

Sustainable community-based tourism (CBT) has become an essential component in tourism development, particularly in rural areas like Meat Village in Toba Regency, North Sumatra. The village has recognized cultural and natural resources, such as traditional ulos weaving and agrotourism activities, which have made it a promising tourist destination. However, the challenge lies in managing these resources in a sustainable manner that benefits the local community. While the community has been involved in tourism activities, their participation in the decision-making processes and management remains limited, especially during the

planning and oversight phases. This lack of full community engagement in key tourism activities could hinder the long-term sustainability of the tourism model in the area.

Additionally, there is a significant gap in understanding how institutional and cultural aspects affect the sustainability of CBT in rural villages. The local community's involvement, particularly in the management of tourism resources, remains insufficient, leading to unequal benefits and underutilized local resources. For instance, traditional leaders have limited influence over tourism management, and many local residents refrain from participating in decision-making processes. These factors create barriers to achieving sustainable CBT that integrates the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of development.

This research is urgent because the development of sustainable community-based tourism in Meat Village has the potential to uplift the local community, both economically and culturally. However, without a clear strategy for sustainable tourism development that incorporates the active participation of all stakeholders, the benefits of tourism may be inequitably distributed, and cultural resources may be underutilized or exploited. Given the increasing investment in the Lake Toba region and the growing interest in sustainable tourism, it is critical to assess and implement strategies that empower local communities, preserve cultural heritage, and promote economic growth in a sustainable manner.

Previous research on community-based tourism (CBT) has highlighted the importance of community involvement in ensuring the sustainability of tourism initiatives. For instance, Sarabia-Molina et al. (2022) emphasize the role of community participation in tourism management and its positive impact on the sustainability of tourism in rural areas. Their study suggests that when local communities are actively involved in tourism planning and management, it leads to better resource management and more equitable economic benefits. Leite & Lousada (2022) discuss the significance of community empowerment in tourism development, noting that empowering local residents enhances their ability to make informed decisions about tourism and, in turn, contributes to the long-term sustainability of tourism projects.

In the context of Indonesia, Oktaviani & Yuliani (2023) examined the economic impacts of tourism development on local communities, emphasizing that while tourism can generate income and employment opportunities, its success depends on careful planning and active community participation. They argue that sustainable tourism models must consider the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of the tourism experience to be truly effective. This aligns with the findings of Hidayat & Muchtar (2022), who explored the role of institutions in supporting sustainable tourism in rural areas. They highlighted that local institutions play a crucial role in managing tourism resources and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared by the entire community.

Despite these valuable contributions, there is a lack of research focused specifically on the integration of cultural and institutional aspects in the sustainability of CBT in rural Indonesian villages. Most studies have focused on either economic impacts or community participation without considering the broader institutional and cultural frameworks that affect CBT outcomes.

The research gap lies in the insufficient exploration of the institutional and cultural dimensions of community-based tourism, particularly in rural areas like Meat Village. While previous studies have examined the economic and social impacts of tourism, there is a need for more in-depth research into how community participation, traditional leadership, and local institutions influence the sustainability of tourism initiatives. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the institutional and cultural factors that contribute to or hinder the success of CBT in Meat Village.

This research introduces a novel approach by focusing on the interplay between institutional and cultural sustainability within the context of community-based tourism. By examining Meat Village's tourism development from both an institutional and cultural perspective, this study offers new insights into the importance of traditional leadership, community involvement, and local empowerment in achieving sustainable tourism outcomes. The use of Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) and Multiaspect Sustainable Analysis (MSA) software to assess sustainability from multiple dimensions—economic, social, environmental, and institutional—adds a unique methodological contribution to the field of sustainable tourism (Marhesa et al., 2022; Mukhlisin & Trimarstuti, 2023; Priyamanaya & Rijanta, 2020; Swesti et al., 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2024; Wiwit Pura Nurmayanti et al., 2023).

The objective of this study is to assess the sustainability of community-based tourism in Meat Village and to develop a set of strategies aimed at improving its long-term sustainability. Specifically, the research seeks to evaluate the role of community participation, traditional leadership, and institutional frameworks in the tourism management process. Based on these findings, the study will propose actionable strategies to enhance the involvement of the local community in tourism decision-making and management, as well as to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism managers, and local stakeholders in Meat Village and similar rural areas. By identifying key factors that contribute to or hinder the sustainability of community-based tourism, this research will offer practical recommendations for improving community involvement in tourism management, enhancing institutional support, and preserving cultural resources. These strategies can help ensure that tourism development in Meat Village benefits both the local community and the broader region, while also promoting sustainable and culturally respectful practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the sustainability of community-based tourism in Meat Village, located in Tampahan District, Toba Regency, North Sumatra. The research was conducted in November 2023, focusing on Meat Village, a priority tourism destination in the Lake Toba area, known for its rice field and lake landscapes, as well as agrotourism activities tied to traditional

harvest rituals. The village also offers unique attractions, including traditional ulos weaving and the annual "Thousand Tents Festival." The majority of the residents are rice farmers, making agriculture a key sector for analysis in the context of community-based tourism. Data were collected from 50 respondents representing various stakeholders, including farmers, tourism managers, local residents, village government officials, community leaders, and tourists. Respondents were given tailored questionnaires, and in-depth interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data on the sustainability aspects of the village's tourism activities.

The sustainability analysis employed the Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach, using licensed Multiaspect Sustainable Analysis (MSA) software, which focuses on four pillars of sustainability: economic, social, environmental, and institutional, with particular attention given to institutional and cultural factors under the social pillar. A total of 20 factors were used to analyze these aspects, with 16 factors addressing institutional concerns and 4 factors evaluating cultural elements. Each factor was evaluated and categorized into three levels of sustainability: low, medium, and high. To ensure the reliability and credibility of the data, a triangulation method was used, comparing responses from different stakeholders such as local residents, tourism managers, community leaders, and village officials. This approach allowed for a thorough validation of the information gathered and strengthened the overall reliability of the study's findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional and Cultural Sustainability Analysis of Community-Based Tourism in Meat Village Aspects of Community-Based Tourism

In the context of community-based tourism, out of six factors analyzed, three were found to be significant for the sustainability of institutional and cultural aspects: community participation in administrative oversight, supervision by tourism managers, and management rights over the tourism site.

Community participation in administrative oversight in the current management of tourism in Meat Village, based on observations and interviews with residents, revealed the following:

(1) In the *planning phase* of establishing Meat Village as a tourist village, community involvement was minimal. The idea and decision to designate the area as a tourist village were initiated by local government authorities, tourism managers, and local community leaders. The level of community participation during the planning of the tourism programs was notably low, as plans were mainly developed by the tourism management team and only then communicated to the community, without prior engagement.

(2) During the *implementation phase*, the number of residents actively involved in tourism management was relatively high. In practice, community members were organized into *Pokdarwis* (tourism awareness groups) based on their skills and abilities. Community participation in this stage was considerably high, with responsibilities relatively evenly distributed between residents and tourism managers. Both parties worked collaboratively in implementing tourism programs.

(3) In the *monitoring and evaluation phase*, community participation was reflected in the form of feedback, criticisms, and suggestions, which were communicated

directly to the managers through *Pokdarwis*. While some community members provided input, the actual discussion and problem-solving processes were conducted solely by the tourism management team.

Supervision by tourism managers over visitors

In practice, the responsibility of supervising visitors to Meat tourist village does not fall solely on the tourism managers. The local community, through the *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Group), also takes part in monitoring, especially since the tourist area of Meat Village is expansive and has limited access points. This situation has, often unconsciously, made the local residents more aware of the presence of outsiders entering their area. Rules and regulations for visitors are prepared by the tourism managers, taking into consideration the local norms and values of the Meat tourism area.

Management rights over the tourism site in Meat Village

Full management rights of the tourism area are granted to the village tourism managers and *Pokdarwis*. Members of *Pokdarwis* are part of the local community of Meat Village. Local leaders are also included in the tourism management team, as establishing a tourist village requires consideration of many norms, customs, and traditions—elements that are typically contributed by community elders or traditional leaders. However, in reality, traditional leaders today provide limited input regarding the management of tourist sites in Meat Village. Additionally, many local residents tend to refrain from participating in tourism site management as they feel they are not receiving equitable benefits from the tourism activities.

Aspek Community Capacity

In the aspect of community capacity, out of four factors, two were identified as significant for the sustainability of institutional and cultural aspects: community independence in problem-solving and reliance on the community in decision-making.

Community independence in problem-solving in the current management of tourism in Meat Village is based on the empowerment of the local community to lead and make decisions regarding their tourism assets. This includes active involvement in resource management, infrastructure development, and cultural preservation. The community demonstrates a fair level of independence in resolving conflicts related to tourism management, often with significant support from the *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Group).

Relying on the community in decision-making in the current tourism management of Meat Village means giving local communities an active role in determining the direction, policies, and implementation of tourism activities. This approach is essential to ensure that the benefits of tourism are directly felt by the community while also promoting sustainable management. In practice, the local community consistently provides input during planning, implementation, evaluation, and problem-solving processes. However, they are not the final decision-makers. The highest decision-making authority in tourism management rests with the tourism managers and *Pokdarwis*.

Aspek Social Structure

In the aspect of *social structure*, out of six factors, four were identified as significant for the sustainability of institutional and cultural aspects: community empowerment

in tourism management, women's empowerment, conflict resolution, and the involvement of community leaders. Community empowerment in the current management of tourism in Meat Village includes: (1) the community being indirectly involved in planning and managing tourism through forums or groups such as *Pokdarwis* (Tourism Awareness Groups); (2) community members being empowered to create local products that support the tourism sector, such as *ulos* weaving, traditional Batak Toba cuisine, and souvenirs—though this usually occurs only during special events like the annual "1000 Tents Festival"; and (3) community groups such as dance studios being encouraged to use technology like social media and applications to promote tourism. Women's empowerment in tourism management is seen in: (1) the active involvement of women in producing handicrafts, traditional foods, and managing homestays, with their products contributing to the village's tourism appeal; and (2) women holding leadership positions in both *Pokdarwis* and village tourism management. Conflict resolution in tourism is currently handled by: (1) applying customary laws or local wisdom, which is considered more effective as it is rooted in community values and culture, and (2) holding open discussion forums with all stakeholders to understand differing views, interests, and needs. The involvement of community leaders in Meat Village tourism management is seen in their frequent role as mediators in resolving conflicts among local residents, the government, and tourism business actors.

Strategies to Improve Institutional and Cultural Sustainability in Community Based Tourism in Meat Village.

Scenario 1: Improving the Social Aspect

Strategy to Increase Community Participation in Administrative Oversight

According to Cohen and Uphoff (1980), community participation involves several stages, namely decision-making, implementation, benefiting from the results, and evaluation. In the context of tourism, this includes contributing ideas, labor, skills, and resources such as money and goods. The goal is to foster independence and improve the well-being of the local community.

An organization that involves local residents through the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*) already exists in Meat Tourism Village. However, its implementation needs to be optimized in terms of contributing to the village tourism management. Regular monthly meetings must be held to ensure ongoing discussions regarding tourism management, including homestay provision, access to tourist destinations, and other tourism attractions.

Strategy to Enhance Supervision by Tourism Managers in the Management of Meat Tourism Village.

Implementation of digital technology, such as using applications and digital systems to monitor tourism operations, can help improve supervision efficiency. Technologies like surveillance cameras, online reporting apps, and data analytics can provide real-time information on safety, visitor density, and the condition of tourism facilities.

Capacity building for tourism managers through training and skill development in risk management, environmental conservation, and stakeholder communication can

enhance the effectiveness of supervision. This includes training on both local and international regulations.

Consistent involvement of Pokdarwis and local communities in monitoring efforts can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility toward the destination. This participation may include monitoring tourist activities, reporting environmental damage, or supervising rule violations.

Conducting regular evaluations of facilities, services, and overall tourism destination management ensures that operations meet set standards. These evaluations can also help identify issues before they escalate into critical problems.

Strategy to increase management rights for tourist attractions in tourism management

Decentralization of Management, by shifting some of the responsibility to local communities and other stakeholders can increase engagement and efficiency in the management of tourist attractions. With decentralization, local managers better understand the needs and potential of the region. Building partnerships with the private sector. These partnerships allow access to greater resources and more innovation in tourism management.

No.	Aspect	Existing	Perbaikan Aspek Social Structure
1	Community Based Tourism	66.67	66.67
2	Community Capacity	62.5	62.5
3	Social Structure	50	91.67
Total Average		59.72	73.61
Status Sustainability		Sustainable	Very Sustainable

Scenario 2: Improvement of Social Structure and Community Capacity Aspects Strategies to increase community independence in solving problems in tourism management

- Empowering local communities by involving local communities in decision-making and in resolving related conflicts in tourism management.

2. Strategies to improve the community in the current decision-making in tourism management

- Build balanced cooperation between stakeholders. One way to ensure community involvement in decision-making is to form strong partnerships between governments, the private sector, and local communities. This includes the establishment of a tourist destination management forum or board involving representatives of the local community. Decisions taken through joint discussions can lead to fairer and more sustainable policies.

- Providing education through training and education on aspects of tourism management. This can help communities to play an active role in decision-making,

understand the benefits and risks faced by tourist destinations, and how to protect and utilize tourism potential in a sustainable manner.

- Providing access to communities to participate in the planning and formulation of existing tourism policies can increase the sense of ownership of these tourist destinations. This can be through surveys, public consultations, or discussion forums involving local residents in every stage of management.

No.	Aspect	Existing	Perbaikan Aspek Social Structure	Perbaikan Aspek Community Capacity
1	Community Based Tourism	66.67	66.67	66.67
2	Community Capacity	62.5	62.5	100
3	Social Structure	50	91.67	91.67
Total Average		59.72	73.61	86.11
Status Sustainability		Sustainable	Very Sustainable	Very Sustainable

Figure 2. Sustainability Status of Community Capacity Aspects Improvement

Skenario 3: Perbaikan Semua Aspek

Strategy to increase community empowerment in tourism management

Providing skills training in the field of tourism, such as tour guides, homestay management, digital marketing, and entrepreneurship. This education will increase the capacity of the community to be directly involved in the tourism sector. Develop community-based tourism where local communities are involved in decision-making related to policy and management of tourist destinations.

Strategies to increase women's empowerment in tourism management

Providing specialized training for women to improve their skills in the tourism industry, such as female tour guides, managerial skills, and entrepreneurship training. Provide women with easier access to financing or business support for their local tourism businesses, such as homestays or culinary businesses. Ensuring equality in decision-making: Inviting women to be part of the management structure of tourist destinations or management boards so that they are involved in decision-making related to tourism policy.

Strategies to improve conflict resolution in tourism management

Build open dialogue: Open transparent communication channels between all stakeholders (government, community, private sector) to prevent and resolve conflicts related to the management of tourist attractions. Mediation and facilitation of conflict resolution: Provide a neutral facilitator or mediator to help resolve conflicts involving interests between local communities and tourism managers. Participation in Decision Making: Involving all parties in the decision-making process from the beginning to reduce tensions and prevent conflicts arising from one-sided decisions.

Strategies to Increase the Involvement of Community Leaders in Tourism Management

Acknowledging the Role of Local Traditions and Culture: Inviting community leaders to share insights and knowledge about local culture that is important for sustainable tourism management. Building Trust and Partnerships: Establish good relationships with community leaders and ensure that they have a voice in the planning of tourist destinations, to create a sense of belonging and support for tourism management.

No.	Aspect	Existing	Perbaikan Aspek Social Structure	Perbaikan Aspek Community Capacity	Perbaikan Semua Aspek
1	Community Based Tourism	66.67	66.67	66.67	91.67
2	Community Capacity	62.5	62.5	100	100
3	Social Structure	50	91.67	91.67	100
Total Average		59.72	73.61	86.11	97.22
Status Sustainability		Sustainable	Very Sustainable	Very Sustainable	Very Sustainable

Figure 3. Sustainability Status of All Aspects Improvement

CONCLUSION

From the results of data processing using Multiaspect Sustainable Analysis (MSA), which focuses on institutional and cultural aspects, it can be concluded that the sustainability strategy for tourism management in Meat Village is centered on empowering local communities in decision-making and involving them in the planning of tourism management. One of the key strategies is to enhance women’s empowerment in decision-making, which is expected to have a positive impact on sustainable tourism. Providing education and training to women in Meat Village on tourism management is also a critical component of this strategy. Furthermore, the empowerment of local communities in conflict resolution is essential, with a particular emphasis on involving traditional leaders in mediating and resolving conflicts within the village. This approach ensures that tourism development is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and sustainable in the long term.

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