

Kauman Cultural Village: The Transformation of Cultural Tourism Towards an Inclusive Attraction

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ABSTRACT

Kauman Village in Kudus Regency has great potential for cultural tourism, but it still faces several challenges, particularly in terms of inclusivity and diversification of tourist attractions. The development of culture-based tourism in this village is crucial for boosting the local economy and attracting more visitors. Through the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method, this service explored local cultural potentials such as traditional games. The program successfully involved the community in tourism development, raising awareness of cultural potential, and creating new business opportunities. The successful revitalization of traditional games such as jumping rope, egrang bambu, and gobak sodor has attracted tourists and strengthened Kauman Village's identity as an inclusive cultural tourism destination. The service results show that a participatory approach and proper cultural promotion can significantly enhance tourism appeal and economic impact for the local community.

Keywords: cultural tourism, inclusivity, participatory rural appraisal, tourism village, traditional games

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the key sectors supporting the economy of various regions in Indonesia. In addition to making a significant contribution to economic growth, tourism also plays a role in increasing local community income (Budhi Pamungkas Gautama et al., 2020; Ken, 2022). Kudus Regency, for instance, has made this sector one of its primary development focuses, especially in the aspect of cultural tourism. One destination with great potential is Kauman Village. This village is known for its rich cultural heritage, including deep historical values and traditions. However, the development of cultural tourism in Kauman Village still faces several challenges. One major issue is the gap in perception among both the local community and tourists regarding the village's potential. The community still views the tourism sector as something that has not yet brought tangible benefits (Gadzali et al., 2023). Therefore, efforts are needed to educate and raise awareness so that the cultural tourism potential in Kauman Village can be optimally utilized (Muhammad Saif Aziz et al., 2023).

The development of tourism in Kauman Village is crucial as it can have a positive impact on economic growth and increase local community income. Tourism has great potential to become a catalyst for driving regional economic progress, especially with the concept of a tourist village currently being developed (Gede et al., 2016; Siswantari & Septiyani, 2023). However, Kauman Village still faces various challenges in tourism development, one of which is the stereotypical view that this destination is only suitable for Muslim tourists and limited to pilgrimage activities to the tomb of Sunan Kudus. This perception limits Kauman Village's appeal to a wider range of tourists, thus hindering the development of other tourism potentials, such as its cultural heritage, culinary offerings, and architecture, which could be unique attractions. Therefore, a more inclusive promotional strategy and diversification of tourist attractions are needed so that Kauman Village can

attract various segments of tourists and provide greater economic benefits to the local community (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Kauman Village has rich and diverse local potential that can attract tourists from various backgrounds. In addition to pilgrimages to the tomb of Sunan Kudus and the Kudus Tower, the village offers unique experiences through its cultural potential, such as traditional ceremonies, local events, and salawatan (Islamic chanting). These attractions can be a strong draw for visitors seeking to experience the depth of local traditions. The village's local wisdom and traditional children's games, passed down from generation to generation, also hold significant value as part of Kauman Village's cultural identity. This potential is crucial to develop in creating a diverse tourism experience that goes beyond religious pilgrimages.

However, the main issue faced is the low awareness among the community and tourists regarding the diversity of these potentials. While tourist infrastructure, such as the Kudus Tower, is being improved, tourism development cannot stop at physical upgrades alone. It is important to change the perception of the community, which has long viewed Kauman Village as a destination limited only to Muslim tourists. Without this shift, efforts to fully develop the village's cultural potential will be difficult to achieve. Therefore, a comprehensive promotional strategy is needed to highlight the uniqueness of the local culture, so that Kauman Village can be recognized as a center of cultural wealth that is inclusive and open to all.

METHOD

This community service project utilized the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method, which involves a participatory approach from the community in the process of information gathering, analysis, and decision-making (Selvia et al., 2023). Through this method, the facilitators and the community jointly analyze problems and seek solutions that best fit the local needs. PRA enables the community to actively engage in the process of understanding, planning, and evaluating the obstacles and potentials present. The primary goal of PRA is to ensure that decisions are made based on a deep understanding of local conditions and can provide direct benefits to the involved community (Sulthan & Ardiputra, 2022). This process is carried out using a multidisciplinary approach, where various fields of expertise are combined to offer comprehensive and sustainable solutions for the community, in this case for the development of a cultural tourism village in Kauman Village.

In the problem-solving framework, there are four main stages carried out. The first stage is focused discussions to design a rebranding strategy for Kauman Tourist Village as a cultural tourism village. This stage aims to identify the initial needs and supporting components required for the development of cultural tourism. The second stage is exploring cultural tourism potential, including historical stories and local cultural experiences that tourists can engage with. This stage aims to ensure that local cultural potential can be formulated and optimized as a tourism attraction. The third stage is the preparation of cultural materials, where cultural information and materials are organized so that they can be understood and accessed by the entire community. The final stage is mentoring the implementation of cultural tourism development, where Kauman Village is gradually guided to become a cultural tourism village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A tourist village is a form of rural tourism that emphasizes the daily life of the local community and its environment as the main attraction. Culture-based tourism that focuses on local traditions offers added value to tourists seeking a unique experience that cannot be found in big cities (Ngaisah et al., 2021). Kauman Village in Kudus Regency has great potential to become a cultural tourism hub, focusing on the development of local traditions, traditional games, and cultural heritage. The implementation of community service activities in Kauman Village has been carried out successfully and in line with expectations. This is evident from the achievement of the program's objectives and activities aimed at exploring cultural potential. Based on discussions with cultural stakeholders from Menara Kudus, one of the cultural potentials that can be highlighted is traditional games. Reviving

traditional games can be one of the tourism attractions in Kauman Village. This effort helps preserve traditional games, which have started to fade away in Kudus City, and increase the interest of both local and foreign tourists in visiting Kauman Village.

Based on the results of coordination with the Department of Culture and Tourism, local tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis), and the implementers of tourism in Kauman Village during the preparation phase, the service team selected games that align with the culture and interests of the local residents, ensuring that the goal of developing the tourist village into a culture-based tourist destination can be achieved. The selected games include jumping rope, bamboo stilts, wooden clogs, as well as non-competitive games such as gobak sodor, dakon, hide-and-seek, and spinning tops. On the other hand, to support the development of traditional games in Kauman Village, which will eventually be commercialized through events and tour packages, it was agreed that the tour guides who will explain the philosophy and the rules of the games will receive regular training through local youth organizations (karang taruna), and these organizations will be provided with a guidebook from the service team.



Figure 1. Discussion Activities for Exploring the Cultural Potential of Kauman Village

Based on the results of previous community service activities, there have been several significant achievements in promoting and developing a culture-based tourist village in Kauman Village (Yetty et al., 2020). One of the main successes is the increased community involvement in cultural tourism development through a participatory approach (Wibowo et al., 2022). The local community has begun to recognize the importance of their local cultural potential as a tourist attraction. Through training and mentorship, residents have been able to manage and organize cultural events, such as traditional ceremonies and games, that attract the interest of tourists (Kusumajanti et al., 2021; Setyaningrum et al., 2021). One of the efforts made in this community service project is to revive traditional games that have started to be abandoned by modern society. Traditional games such as jumping rope, bamboo stilts, wooden clogs, gobak sodor, and dakon have become an integral part of the life of the Kauman community, and through the service program, these games have been promoted as one of the tourism attractions in the village.

Traditional games are not just forms of entertainment; they also carry high educational and cultural values (Pangestu, 2022). Through these games, tourists are not only invited to play but also to understand the philosophy behind them. For example, the game of gobak sodor teaches teamwork and strategy, while bamboo stilts enhance balance and physical strength. To ensure the sustainability of traditional games as tourist attractions, the service team conducts training for tour guides. The guides are equipped with knowledge about the history and philosophy of traditional games, enabling them to explain them to tourists in an engaging and informative way. Additionally, this training includes methods for teaching these games to children, both from the local community and among tourists.

The success of developing traditional games in Kauman Village is reflected not only in the enthusiasm of the local community but also in the increase in the number of tourists visiting the village. Tourists, particularly families and children, are drawn to experience traditional games that they may not encounter elsewhere. This adds to Kauman Village's appeal as an authentic and educational culture-based tourist destination. In addition to traditional games, this tourist village also regularly hosts cultural events, such as traditional ceremonies and arts festivals. These events are integrated with the introduction of traditional games, creating a richer and more memorable tourism experience for visitors. For example, during the "Bukak Luwur" festival, tourists are invited to try various traditional games at Taman Menara Kudus, alongside local community members and other visitors. This approach has proven effective in attracting tourists' attention and increasing their interest in returning to the village.

One of the keys to the success of this community service program is the community's readiness to embrace change and actively participate in the development of the tourist village. Through a series of training sessions and focused discussions, the local community has begun to understand the importance of the cultural tourism concept and their role in supporting the sustainability of the tourist village. The service team also provides guidance to the community in managing traditional games, allowing them to become part of the tourism attractions offered. With this understanding, the community no longer views Kauman Village solely as a pilgrimage destination but also as a cultural center that can serve as a source of new income. The village youth, especially those involved in local youth organizations (karang taruna), have been empowered to become tour guides and facilitators in traditional games. They are also trained to promote the tourist village through social media and other digital platforms. This success has not only led to an increase in the number of tourists but also contributed to local economic growth. As more tourists show interest in culture and traditional games, new business opportunities arise for the community, such as renting out traditional game equipment, creating unique souvenirs, and organizing cultural events.

CONCLUSION

The development of traditional games as a cultural tourism attraction in Kauman Village has had a positive impact on increasing tourist interest and strengthening the village's identity as a culture-based tourist destination. This community service program has successfully revived traditional games that were nearly abandoned, making them a unique attraction for tourists. These games serve not only as entertainment but also as an educational tool that introduces values of togetherness, cooperation, and local wisdom to visitors. The success of the community service program is also evident in the active involvement of the local community, especially the youth, who play roles as tour guides and facilitators of traditional games. Through training and mentorship, they are able to promote this tourist village to a wider audience, both directly and through digital platforms. Thus, this program not only contributes to the preservation of local culture but also enhances the local economy through new business opportunities, such as renting out game equipment, creating souvenirs, and organizing cultural events.

Overall, the development of a culture-based tourist village in Kauman Village demonstrates that local cultural potential can be a significant resource in attracting tourists, as long as it is well-managed and involves the community. With sustainable management, Kauman Village has the potential to become a more inclusive tourist destination, attracting visitors from diverse backgrounds and positively impacting economic growth and the welfare of the local community. This proves that the development of culture-based tourism rooted in local wisdom can be an important pillar in sustainable tourism development.

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