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KEGIATAN BIMBINGAN BELAJAR DALAM MENINGKATKAN MINAT BELAJAR SISWA DI SMP ICEYA NDAHA

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1 - 6

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PEMANFAATAN SAMPAH PLASTIK SEBAGAI KETERAMPILAN SISWA UNTUK PEMBUATAN ECOBRICK DI DESA NGINGIT KECAMATAN TUMPANG KABUPATEN MALANG

Yohanes Laba Tahilia¹, Nok Izatul Yazidah^{1*}, Yunis Sulistyorini¹, Riyanto Riyanto¹, Nisvu Nanda Saputra²

7 - 12

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COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT VIA ACADEMIC-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN TOURISM EVENT MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF LANTA NICE BEACH RESORT

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13 - 20

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RESTAURANT SERVICE SYSTEM DURING SPECIAL EVENTS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AT LANTA NICE BEACH RESORT, THAILAND

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21 - 29

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UPAYA PENGUATAN PARIWISATA BUDAYA MELALUI PENYELENGGARAAN EVENT DI LANTA NICE BEACH RESORT, THAILAND

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30 - 40

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COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT VIA ACADEMIC-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN TOURISM EVENT MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF LANTA NICE BEACH RESORT

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Abstract: Lanta Nice Beach Resort demonstrates significant potential for sustainable tourism growth through strategic collaboration between university students and the local community. This study examines a community-based event development initiative, wherein multidisciplinary students engage in capacity-building programs to enhance local tourism attractiveness. The program employed a combination of workshops, discussions, and practical training focused on event planning, marketing strategies, and operational execution. Data were collected through participant surveys and program evaluations to assess knowledge acquisition and perceived benefits. Findings reveal that over 80% of participants reported improved understanding of tourism event management, while 90% acknowledged tangible benefits for local tourism development. Key outcomes include the design of flagship events, such as cultural festivals and art performances, intended to attract both domestic and international visitors. Furthermore, active community participation reflects increased awareness of local cultural identity and the importance of sustainable tourism practices. This research highlights the efficacy of student-community collaboration in co-creating tourism experiences that stimulate economic development, foster cultural preservation, and enhance visitor engagement. The study provides actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to implement community-driven tourism initiatives in coastal destinations, emphasizing the integration of educational resources with local stakeholder engagement to achieve long-term tourism growth.

Keyword: Community-Based Tourism; Event Management; Student Engagement; Sustainable Tourism; Cultural Festivals

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely recognized as a key economic sector with substantial potential to enhance local community welfare. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2022), the global tourism industry continues to demonstrate significant growth, contributing considerably to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many countries. In Indonesia, tourism plays a crucial role in job creation and income generation, particularly in regions endowed with rich natural and cultural attractions (Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, 2021). Beyond its economic contribution, tourism also



serves as a vehicle for cultural preservation, social cohesion, and community empowerment, emphasizing the importance of sustainable and inclusive development strategies.

One of the most effective methods for attracting visitors to a destination is through the organization of events. Events can function either as primary tourism attractions or as complementary activities that enhance the overall tourism experience (Getz, 2012). Well-structured events have been shown to increase visitor numbers, promote local culture, and foster community involvement in tourism management (Hall, 2019). These events range from cultural festivals and art performances to culinary exhibitions, all of which provide unique opportunities to showcase local heritage while stimulating economic activity. In addition, events can create platforms for knowledge transfer, skill development, and networking, contributing to the capacity building of local stakeholders.

Collaborative initiatives that involve students and local communities have emerged as a promising approach to strengthen the attractiveness of tourism destinations. Students, especially those from multidisciplinary backgrounds, can assist communities in event planning, marketing, and execution, combining academic insights with local knowledge to optimize outcomes (Resort, 2018). Such collaborations not only enhance the professional skills of students but also empower community members by providing guidance and structured frameworks for sustainable tourism development. The integration of educational resources with community participation facilitates co-creation of tourism experiences that are culturally authentic, economically beneficial, and socially inclusive.

In the context of coastal tourism, resorts and beach destinations offer ideal platforms for community-based tourism initiatives. Lanta Nice Beach Resort, for example, presents significant potential to implement collaborative tourism programs that engage students and local residents in developing flagship events. These activities aim to attract domestic and international tourists while reinforcing the region's cultural identity and promoting local entrepreneurship. By actively participating in event management, the community gains practical experience and a deeper understanding of tourism-based economic opportunities, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility toward sustainable development.

This study seeks to analyze the role of student-community collaboration in enhancing tourism attractiveness through event-based initiatives at Lanta Nice Beach Resort. Specifically, it examines how structured training, planning, and implementation processes influence community capacity, visitor engagement, and economic outcomes. By exploring these dynamics, the research aims to provide insights into effective strategies for sustainable, community-driven tourism development. Understanding these mechanisms is critical for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and academic institutions seeking to promote inclusive and resilient tourism ecosystems that benefit both visitors and local populations (Fauzi, 2017; Safari & Riyanti, 2023).

In summary, this study underscores the potential of integrating academic expertise with local community initiatives to create sustainable tourism attractions. Through the lens of event management, it highlights how strategic

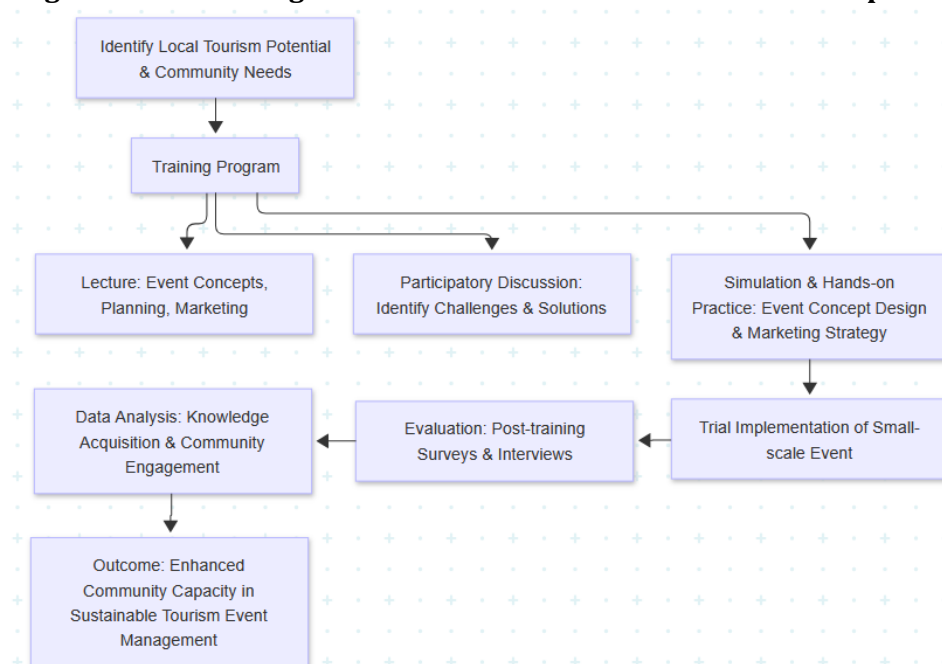
collaboration can simultaneously enhance visitor experiences, preserve cultural heritage, and empower communities economically and socially. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on community-based tourism development, offering actionable guidance for destinations seeking to balance growth with sustainability.

METHOD

This study employed a participatory approach to community empowerment through hands-on training and mentoring for local residents surrounding Lanta Nice Beach Resort. The research was conducted in several stages, beginning with a preliminary field survey and semi-structured interviews to identify local tourism potential and community needs for event organization.

The training program was structured into three core methods. First, lectures provided theoretical knowledge on tourism-focused event concepts, event planning, and effective marketing strategies, emphasizing the role of events in enhancing destination attractiveness. Second, participatory discussions engaged participants in identifying challenges in event planning and collaboratively exploring practical solutions. This method encouraged deeper understanding of technical and managerial aspects of event management. Third, simulation and hands-on practice involved small groups of participants working with students to design event concepts and develop marketing strategies. Groups prepared detailed event proposals and conducted trial implementations of small-scale events prior to full execution.

Figure 1. Methodological Framework for Tourism Event Development



Evaluation of the program was conducted through post-training surveys and follow-up interviews to assess improvements in participants' knowledge, skills, and readiness to independently manage tourism events. Data from these

assessments were analyzed descriptively to identify trends in knowledge acquisition and community engagement.

By integrating lectures, discussions, and practical exercises, this methodology aimed to enhance community capacity in sustainable event planning and execution. The participatory framework facilitated co-creation between students and local residents, fostering both practical skills and strategic thinking necessary for developing tourism attractions that are culturally authentic, economically viable, and socially inclusive.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development and enhancement of tourism attractions fundamentally depend on the effective collaboration of diverse stakeholders. Within the context of Lanta Nice Beach Resort, the engagement between university students and the local community provided an exemplary model of cooperative strategy, highlighting the critical role of knowledge sharing and joint action in tourism event management. Collaborative frameworks, as articulated by Gray (1989), suggest that multi-stakeholder interactions foster synergy, enhance problem-solving capacities, and improve the overall effectiveness of project implementation. By facilitating structured cooperation between academic institutions and local residents, this study illustrates how integrating theoretical knowledge with local experiential insights can result in innovative and culturally sensitive event concepts, contributing to both tourism development and community empowerment.

From a community-based tourism (CBT) perspective, the participation of local stakeholders is pivotal in generating sustainable economic, social, and cultural benefits (Telfer & Sharpley, 2015). The data collected during the pre-implementation phase, through surveys and semi-structured interviews, confirmed a high level of community interest in developing tourism events. Nevertheless, there were evident deficiencies in structured planning, budgeting, and marketing competencies among community members. These gaps resonate strongly with Tosun's (2006) Community Participation Theory, which emphasizes that active engagement and skill development are central determinants of the sustainability and success of tourism initiatives. Without systematic training and empowerment, community-driven programs risk inefficiency and limited impact despite the availability of local enthusiasm and potential.

The participatory training program implemented in this study addressed these challenges through a three-phase approach: lectures, participatory discussions, and simulation-based hands-on exercises. The lecture phase provided foundational theoretical knowledge on tourism event management, including conceptual frameworks, operational planning, and marketing strategies. By introducing principles of experiential tourism and strategic event design, students and community members gained a structured understanding of how tourism events can serve as both attractions and vehicles for local economic development.

The participatory discussion phase was designed to stimulate critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative planning. Participants were encouraged to identify potential challenges in conceptualizing and

implementing tourism events and to co-create feasible solutions. This process facilitated knowledge exchange between students, who brought academic expertise and project management skills, and local residents, who contributed intimate knowledge of the cultural, environmental, and social contexts of the destination. Such interactions exemplify the principles of co-creation and participatory learning, where experiential knowledge is validated and refined through structured engagement, consistent with Schmitt’s (1999) Experiential Marketing Theory, which highlights the creation of memorable visitor experiences through active involvement and engagement.

The final phase of the program, simulation and hands-on practice, allowed participants to apply acquired knowledge in a practical context. Working in small groups, participants developed detailed event proposals encompassing conceptual design, target audience identification, marketing strategy formulation, operational budgeting, and implementation logistics. Each proposal underwent a rigorous feedback process, with both peers and instructors evaluating feasibility, cultural appropriateness, and potential for attracting domestic and international visitors. The projects generated during this phase included innovative proposals for traditional food festivals, interactive cultural performances, and tourism-themed sports competitions, reflecting the participants’ capacity to integrate local cultural assets into marketable tourism events.

Evaluation metrics demonstrated substantial improvements in competency and confidence. Before the training, only 15% of the 30 participants expressed confidence in creating tourism event proposals. Following the program, confidence levels increased dramatically to 70%, with 80% of participants showing measurable improvement in understanding key principles of event management. These findings underscore the efficacy of structured, participatory learning models in enhancing local capacity for independent planning and execution of tourism events. They also highlight the potential for such initiatives to cultivate local entrepreneurship, improve economic participation, and foster social cohesion by empowering residents to actively contribute to tourism development.

To contextualize and validate the observed outcomes, Table 1 presents comparative data from credible international studies on community-based tourism, participatory event management, and student-community collaborations. These studies underscore the global relevance and effectiveness of participatory models in enhancing local capacity and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Table 1. Comparative Impact of Participatory Tourism Event Development Models

Study/Source	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Simpson (2008)	Training programs enhanced business management skills among local entrepreneurs, leading to improved	Validates the participatory training approach, demonstrating its efficacy in improving

	profitability and sustained economic growth.	local business competencies.
Community-Based Tourism and UN SDGs (MDPI, 2022)	CBT programs advance sustainable development goals by fostering economic, social, and environmental benefits.	Highlights the alignment of CBT with sustainable tourism, supporting the objectives of the current study.
Tourism Development and Management – BS Program (ASU, 2023)	Students acquire critical planning, management, and leadership skills for effective event execution.	Reinforces the role of academic involvement in enhancing local event management capacity.
Community Engagement Through Event Tourism (ResearchGate, 2023)	Event tourism fosters community involvement, empowerment, and regenerative tourism development.	Supports the concept that events can catalyze community engagement, aligning with the study’s objectives.
Residents’ Perspective on CBT (PMC, 2020)	CBT strengthens local communities by supporting resource management and equitable benefit distribution.	Confirms the importance of equitable and inclusive participation in local tourism development initiatives.

The integration of theoretical frameworks with empirical observations provides several key insights. First, collaborative planning between students and local residents enhances both the quality and feasibility of event concepts. Second, participatory training significantly improves local knowledge, confidence, and operational skills necessary for managing tourism events independently. Third, the combination of experiential learning and community engagement produces culturally authentic, economically beneficial, and socially inclusive outcomes. These findings have practical implications for tourism planners, local governments, and academic institutions seeking to implement community-driven tourism programs.

Figure 2. Presentation of Festival Event Knowledge Material



[Source: Author, 2024]

Figure 2. Lanta NICE Beach Resort Tourism

[Source: Author, 2024]

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate both the content delivery and the tourism context of Lanta Nice Beach Resort. Figure 1 shows the structured delivery of festival event knowledge, highlighting the combination of lectures, discussions, and practical exercises. Figure 2 contextualizes the resort as a scenic coastal destination with high tourism potential, reinforcing the applicability and relevance of the training program. Visual documentation supports the assertion that collaborative and structured interventions can translate into actionable tourism initiatives that enhance both visitor experiences and local livelihoods.

The results of this study demonstrate that student-community collaboration in tourism event management at Lanta Nice Beach Resort produces measurable improvements in skills, confidence, and practical outcomes for local participants. By applying theories of collaboration, community-based tourism, event tourism, and experiential marketing, the program successfully bridged knowledge gaps, fostered innovation, and strengthened the cultural and economic vitality of the local community. The research highlights that integrating academic resources with community engagement represents a sustainable approach to tourism development, providing both immediate benefits in event execution and long-term contributions to destination attractiveness and community empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of tourism-based event management training for the local community surrounding Lanta Nice Beach Resort represents a strategic approach to community empowerment and sustainable tourism development. The program demonstrated significant positive outcomes by enhancing participants' knowledge, skills, and confidence in planning and executing tourism events professionally. Active engagement in discussions, collaborative event planning, and group presentations reflected the participants' enthusiasm and commitment. Furthermore, the training equipped community members with practical insights into marketing strategies, operational management, and budget planning, providing a solid foundation for the independent organization of tourism events. These results

indicate that structured, participatory training can serve as an effective mechanism for strengthening local capacity, promoting cultural authenticity, and supporting the long-term development of local tourism initiatives.

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