

Optimizing the Potential of Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village, Kampar Regency within the Framework of Village Autonomy

Mhd. Rafi¹

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau¹

e-mail: mhd.rafi@uin-suska.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana upaya optimalisasi potensi wisata Desa Kebun Tinggi di Kabupaten Kampar dilaksanakan dalam kerangka otonomi desa. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data meliputi wawancara, dokumentasi, dan tinjauan pustaka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa upaya optimalisasi potensi wisata desa dilakukan oleh pemerintah desa melalui partisipasi dan pemberdayaan masyarakat, khususnya dalam pengelolaan dan pengembangan objek wisata Air Terjun Batu Tilam. Peresmian Desa Kebun Tinggi sebagai desa wisata telah mendapat dukungan yang cukup besar dari pemerintah desa, yang telah mendukung dan mempromosikannya, sehingga berdampak ekonomi dan pembangunan bagi masyarakat Kebun Tinggi, meskipun masih belum optimal. Dengan kata lain, optimalisasi potensi wisata Desa Kebun Tinggi telah memenuhi karakteristik pelaksanaan pembangunan dalam kerangka otonomi desa, dan Desa Wisata Kebun Tinggi saat ini dikategorikan sebagai desa wisata yang sedang berkembang.

Kata kunci: Otonomi Desa, Desa Wisata, Pemerintah Desa

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze how efforts to optimize the tourism potential of Kebun Tinggi Village in Kampar Regency are being implemented within the framework of village autonomy. The method used is a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including interviews, documentation, and literature review. The results indicate that efforts to optimize the tourism potential of the village are being carried out by the village government through community participation and empowerment, particularly in the management and development of the Batu Tilam Waterfall tourist attraction. The inauguration of Kebun Tinggi Village as a tourism village has received considerable support from the supra-village government, which has supported and promoted it, resulting in economic and development impacts for the Kebun Tinggi community, although this is still not optimal. In other words, the optimization of Kebun Tinggi Village's tourism potential has met the characteristics of development implementation within the framework of village autonomy, and Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village is currently categorized as a developing tourism village.

Keywords: Village Autonomy, Tourism Village, Village Government

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INTRODUCTION

The management of village resources by the village government and the village community for the common good reflects the implementation of village autonomy. This autonomy is guaranteed by the Village Law, which recognizes villages as legal community units with the authority to regulate and manage their own affairs (Lindawaty, 2012). This enables village governments to optimize the various available potentials to strengthen and enhance village development in collaboration with the community.

In practice, the implementation of village autonomy is highly dependent on the capacity of the village government itself and the active participation of its community. Financial support for village

governance from supra-village governments has so far continued in accordance with the mandate of laws and regulations. However, village independence, as intended by the existence of village autonomy, remains rare in many village administrations.

Referring to this, the government continues to promote various policies oriented towards realizing village independence. Village profiling and mentoring are ongoing to ensure the re-establishment of village autonomy and the effective reduction of dependence on supra-village governments. Pramana et al. (2014) stated that genuine village autonomy can be realized through the authority to establish legal regulations, organize village organizational life, and resolve legal issues within their autonomous regions. Rauf (2016) added that strengthening village autonomy is a means of restoring community identity and local culture, maintaining and developing the indigenous local wisdom of the village community. The implementation of village autonomy requires a significant role and capacity of the village government by empowering the active participation of its community (Aziz, 2016). Strengthening and utilizing village potential within this autonomy framework must continue to pay attention to and preserve the value of local village wisdom.

Local wisdom, simply put, is defined as the uniqueness or characteristics of a particular region or community. Wibowo and Gunawan (2015) define local wisdom as a nation's identity, enabling it to adapt and even filter other cultures, creating its own unique character. This identity adapts to the views that guide its people's lives and serves as a means of defending against conflicting values. According to Ruslan (2018) local wisdom is defined as a local cultural richness, not derived from outside sources, that serves as a guideline for policy and lifelong wisdom. The agreed-upon values that bind life together will foster a certain character based on geographic region, geological relationships, cultural identity, and so on. This local wisdom can then become the primary driving force behind the management of tourist villages (Wirdayanti et al., 2019).

Local wisdom values, managed to attract and enhance village tourism potential, can impact the village economy. However, tourism potential must be managed effectively. In the village context, the concept of tourist villages offers community-based tourism management as its primary element (Sudibya, 2018). According to Purwanggono, (2009) when a village declares itself a tourist village, its development includes identifying potential based on community characteristics, economic aspects, and empowering residents as managers. The development of tourist villages aligns with the concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), which is tourism management that takes into account environmental, social, and cultural sustainability (Ramadan et al., 2022).

Lack of synergy between central and regional policies, limited funding, and varying levels of community participation are some of the challenges in developing tourist villages (Sugito & Tjenreng, 2025). Considering this, Kebun Tinggi Village in Kampar Regency is one of the tourist villages in Riau

Province, said to have successfully highlighted the natural beauty of its Batu Tilam waterfall and become a model (Ramadhan, 2021). This remote and relatively isolated village is currently striving to strengthen its presence as a popular tourist village in Riau Province. The process to reach this point is certainly not easy, given the village's difficult access and geographical location in Kampar Regency, Riau Province. It is interesting to see how the perspective of developing a tourist village within the framework of village autonomy in Kebun Tinggi Village, Kampar Regency. Based on this, the aim of writing this article is to analyze how the government of Kebun Tinggi Village, Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency, is optimizing tourism potential within the framework of village autonomy.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach. This approach allows for more in-depth explanations and is appropriate to the research context (Moleong, 2010). Data collection methods included interviews, documentation, and literature review. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in the management of the Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village. Data collection through documentation involved gathering village government documents, village profiles, and relevant laws and regulations. Literature review was conducted by reviewing references and previous studies relevant to the research theme. Data were analyzed interactively through the stages of data collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana 2014)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Optimizing Tourism Potential in Kebun Tinggi Village

Kebun Tinggi Village, Kampar Regency, covers a total area of approximately 86 km², 165 km from the district capital, and has a population of 413. The village has a hilly topography with elevations ranging from 100 to 300 m above sea level (BPS, 2024). Kebun Tinggi Village is currently known as a popular tourist attraction in Riau Province, namely the Batu Tilam Waterfall, which won first place in the 2020 Indonesian Tourism Awards in the Most Popular Hidden Paradise category. The Batu Tilam tourist destination boasts views of rocky hills adorned with two tunnel entrances and 27 waterfalls that fall precisely at the edge of the cave (Jadesta, 2023).

Looking back, the development of the Batu Tilam Waterfall tourist attraction is inseparable from the awareness of the village government and community about the village's tourism potential. This identified potential was then discussed and developed. This development agreement began in 2018 based on decisions and discussions with local village leaders and the community. This demonstrates the characteristics of village autonomy in identifying and developing village development based on mutual agreement and deliberation. Consistent with the research findings of Nur et al. (2025) on optimizing the potential of tourist villages, the optimization of Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village's potential is also carried out by maintaining existing local wisdom values. The development of the tourism village utilizes the

village's potential by integrating natural, cultural, and culinary tourism concepts that highlight the distinctive characteristics of the tourism village.

A tourism village, as a unified ecosystem, requires an integrated understanding of how the village should optimize its potential and uniqueness, its strengths, and its weaknesses to become a strong attraction as a tourist village (Wirdayanti et al., 2019). Efforts to optimize the village's tourism potential subsequently received collective attention, leading the village government and the community to form a tourism awareness group. The encouragement of the supra-village government and the awareness of the village government and the community ultimately paved the way for developing the village's tourism potential by leveraging its established tourism village status. Maximizing the potential as a tourist village for the government and community of Kebun Tinggi, Kampar Regency, ultimately provides benefits through the creation of new jobs through tourism management, improving facilities and preserving culture and traditions, providing a positive impact on the village economy. However, currently, based on the results of a study by Suhendra et al (2023), the main problem in developing Batu Tilam Waterfall tourism lies in difficult access to the location and the lack of telecommunications network facilities, so that tourism development is still far from implementing sustainable tourism (Ramadan et al., 2022).

Village Tourism Institutions Within the Framework of Village Autonomy

The Batu Tilam tourist attraction has been managed institutionally, utilizing village authority within the framework of village autonomy. Since its initial popularity, the village government, through the village head, has established a community group known as Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Community Group) in Kebun Tinggi Village, Kampar Kiri Hulu District, Kampar Regency, to manage tourism in 2018. In general, Pokdarwis's function is to drive tourism awareness within the destination area and to partner with the central and regional governments in realizing and developing tourism awareness within the community. This role positions Pokdarwis as a bridge between the community and the government, creating a conducive atmosphere for tourists while encouraging active participation by residents in village tourism development (Kemenkraf, 2012)

In line with research findings by Ramadan et al (2022) Pokdarwis in Kebun Tinggi Village is at the forefront of managing the Batu Tilam waterfall tourist destination. Collaboration between Pokdarwis in Kebun Tinggi Village has successfully improved the quality of the Batu Tilam tourist destination. The synergy between the Pokdarwis (Tourism Group) and the Kebun Tinggi Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) also strengthens tourism management, improving services to visitors. Pokdarwis plays a role in fostering and mentoring the community, along with the BUMDes, with the goal of increasing income and stimulating village economic growth.

Efforts to revitalize tourist destinations by Pokdarwis and the local government are ongoing. Budgetary support and a long-term tourism development plan have been developed. The existence of

Pokdarwis demonstrates the active participation of the community in Kebun Tinggi Village. Facilitation by the village government, through village head decrees, is carried out through deliberation and consensus, ensuring that tourism development is packaged as attractively as possible, emphasizing local wisdom and enhancing tourism appeal. Management of homestays, culinary delights, and local traditions are jointly designed and promoted. As an informal institution, Pokdarwis Kebun Tinggi Village serves as a bridge and partner to the government in managing tourism in Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village.

Supra-Village Government Support within the Framework of Village Autonomy

In the context of tourism development, support from supra-village governments remains crucial given the limited capacity of village governments. The most significant support from supra-village governments is the Village Fund, which served as the initial source for developing the Batu Tilam Waterfall tourism potential. The use of this fund was jointly agreed upon by the community to build supporting infrastructure. The allocation of 500 million rupiah in village funds has proven effective. In 2020, Batu Tilam Waterfall won a tourism award in the Hidden Paradise category from the Ministry of Tourism. Furthermore, the Batu Tilam tourist attraction has been included in the Riau Province tourism development plan for 2021-2035. However, it is not categorized as a tourist village, but rather as a potential waterfall tourist attraction in Kampar Regency, Riau Province.

Support and collaboration from supra-village governments are still crucial, especially in tourism development efforts. In line with Ibrahim et al (2024) multi-level collaboration between government actors is crucial in developing village potential, not only in preserving local nature and culture but also in generating significant positive economic and social impacts. Support from the supra-village government has expanded economic development opportunities for the Kebun Tinggi community through the tourism sector. Joint promotion through the tourism village network (Jadesta) and various social media platforms has positively impacted the increase in the number of visitors to Kebun Tinggi Village in Kampar Regency.

However, the formal and legal designation of Kebun Tinggi Village as a tourist village needs to be improved. The policy of determining and guiding tourism villages in Kampar Regency by the local government has received little attention. This means that the de facto recognition of Kebun Tinggi Village as a tourist village, which has been implemented so far, has not been aligned with a strong policy umbrella at the regional government level. Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village is currently categorized as a developing tourism village, so intervention from the supra-village government is still urgently needed. Furthermore, synergy between actors in managing and optimizing the potential of Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village needs to be improved. Limited access and network infrastructure remain significant obstacles, hampering sustainable tourism development. This is in line with the research findings of Ramadan et al (2022).

CONCLUSION

In general, the optimization of the potential of the Kebun Tinggi Tourism Village in Kampar Regency has been implemented through the participation and empowerment of the village community. This aligns with the principles of village autonomy. Empowerment and capacity building of the community, along with the village government, reflect the concrete practice of village autonomy, initiated jointly. These efforts are also reinforced by the attention of the supra-village government, further fostering collective community awareness of the importance of maintaining and developing tourism potential based on local wisdom, which can impact the community's economy in Kebun Tinggi Village, Kampar Regency, Riau Province. However, efforts to optimize the potential of this tourism village are still hampered by limited road access and inadequate telecommunications infrastructure.

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