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Community independence as empowerment in tourism village development: a study from Batu City, East Java

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ABSTRACT

Community independence is a crucial aspect of tourism village development in Batu City, as it reflects their level of empowerment in managing and utilizing local potential sustainably without excessive external dependence. The objective of this study is to analyze community independence as a form of empowerment in the development of tourism villages in Batu City, East Java. This qualitative study employs a phenomenological approach by conducting in-depth interviews with 24 informants, non-participatory observations, and document analysis. Informants were selected using purposive sampling and consisted of village heads, tourism village managers, and business actors in four tourism villages (Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo). Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1984) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The findings of this study indicated that community independence in the development of tourism villages in Batu City is manifested in three main aspects: (1) self-capacity, where the community possesses the ability to manage and develop tourism villages; (2) collective responsibility, where the community actively participates in tourism village activities; and (3) the ability to think and act, where the community takes the initiative in proposing development plans, making decisions, and independently implementing tourism village programs. This study asserted that community empowerment in tourism villages not only enhances economic well-being but also strengthens social cohesion and cultural preservation.

ABSTRAK

Kemandirian masyarakat merupakan aspek penting dalam pengembangan desa wisata di Kota Batu, karena mencerminkan tingkat keberdayaan mereka dalam mengelola dan memanfaatkan potensi lokal secara berkelanjutan tanpa ketergantungan eksternal yang berlebihan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis kemandirian masyarakat sebagai bentuk keberdayaan dalam pengembangan desa wisata di Kota Batu, Jawa Timur. Penelitian kualitatif ini menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi dengan melakukan wawancara mendalam kepada 24 informan, observasi non-partisipatif, dan analisis dokumentasi. Informan dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling, terdiri dari kepala desa, pengelola desa wisata, dan pelaku usaha di empat desa wisata (Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, dan Tulungrejo). Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman (1984), mencakup reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan, dan verifikasi. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemandirian masyarakat dalam pengembangan desa wisata di Kota Batu diwujudkan dalam tiga aspek utama: (1) kapasitas diri, dimana masyarakat memiliki kemampuan dalam mengelola dan mengembangkan desa wisata; (2) tanggung jawab kolektif, di mana masyarakat berpartisipasi dalam

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kegiatan desa wisata; dan (3) kemampuan berpikir dan bertindak, dimana masyarakat inisiatif dalam menyampaikan usulan pengembangan, pengambilan keputusan, dan pelaksanaan program desa wisata secara mandiri. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keberdayaan masyarakat dalam desa wisata tidak hanya meningkatkan kesejahteraan ekonomi tetapi juga memperkuat kohesi sosial dan pelestarian budaya.

INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism villages has become a key strategy in boosting the local economy and empowering communities in various regions of Indonesia (Sulaiman et al., 2022; Rahman & Hakim, 2024). In Batu City, East Java, tourism village development has become a primary focus in efforts to improve community welfare through the tourism sector (Amiruddin et al., 2024). This is due to Batu City's abundant natural and cultural wealth, as well as its significant potential for tourism village development. Community independence in managing tourism villages is the key to successfully establishing sustainable and highly competitive tourism villages (Kusumawardani & Prasetyo, 2023; Ardiansyah et al., 2024).

Community independence refers to the ability of a community to manage local resources and potential independently without relying on external parties (Jasmin et al., 2024). Independence can also be defined as a state in which an individual is capable of standing on their own without depending on others (Desmita, 2009; Spector, 2022). According to Nurhayati (2011), independence reflects an individual's confidence in solving problems without external assistance. Independent individuals are characterized by their ability to address challenges, make their own decisions, and demonstrate initiative and creativity while remaining mindful of their surroundings. In the context of tourism villages, community independence is a key factor in the sustainability of community-based tourism management (Zielinski et al., 2021; Naranjo Llupart, 2022; Dolezal & Novelli, 2022). A self-sufficient tourism village is not only capable of managing its destination sustainably but also contributes to improving the local community's welfare through the utilization of the local economy (Ahmeti & Üstündağ, 2022). This independence is realized through active community participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of tourism programs (Auliandi, 2018; Tong et al., 2024). A study conducted by Auliandi (2018) found that community participation in tourism development in Junrejo Village, Batu City, involves various stages, from planning to the execution of tourism activities.

Community independence in the context of tourism villages reflects the attitudes and actions of the community as a form of empowerment in tourism village development (Sutomo et al., 2024). In this regard, independence refers to a condition in which the community possesses the ability to think, decide, and act independently in solving various challenges while utilizing their existing potential to support tourism village development (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022). Related to this, Sumodiningrat (2000) stated that community empowerment is characterized by independence, which can be achieved through a process of community empowerment. Community empowerment is realized through active participation in developing tourism villages. The primary target of empowerment is communities that initially have limited access to and utilization of village resources. Through empowerment, the community is expected to achieve independence in optimizing their resources to support the sustainable development of tourism villages (Sulaiman et al., 2022).

As a result of the empowerment process, community independence, as stated by Bell and Morse (2008), can be identified through three main characteristics: (1) the community's self-capacity in tourism village development, (2) the community's responsibility in managing tourism villages, and (3) the community's ability to think and act independently in developing tourism villages. These three characteristics serve as indicators that reflect the level of community independence in the development of tourism villages in Batu City. Enhancing the community's self-capacity in tourism village development can be achieved through training programs, education, and skill-building initiatives based on local wisdom. With training programs organized by the Batu City Government (Tourism Office), the community can gain knowledge and skills in destination management, digital marketing, and improving tourism service quality.

A study by Pratiwi et al. (2021) found that communities with strong self-capacity are better able to manage tourism potential independently and innovate in creating sustainable tourism attractions. Therefore, improving community capacity should be a priority in tourism village development policies in Batu City to enable the community to compete in the tourism sector. Additionally, community responsibility in tourism village development is reflected in their active participation in environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and local economic development (Purnamawati, 2021). Community involvement in the planning and management of tourism villages not only fosters a sense of ownership but also strengthens the sustainability of tourism destinations. Research by Nugroho and Wicaksono (2022) revealed that tourism villages with a high level of social responsibility among their residents tend to develop more successfully due to collective awareness in maintaining tourism sustainability. Thus, the success of tourism villages in Batu City does not solely depend on government intervention or external investment but also on the awareness and active

participation of the community in managing and developing their tourism potential. Through capacity building and collective responsibility, tourism villages can grow sustainably and provide long-term benefits for the local community (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021).

The Batu City Government (Tourism Office) had taken strategic steps to promote the development of community-based independent tourism villages. One of these initiatives was the establishment of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) and tourism village institutions in each village, serving as platforms for the community to actively participate in tourism management. This initiative aligns with the findings of Auliandi (2018), which emphasized the importance of community participation in tourism development in Junrejo Village. However, previous research has been limited in examining the effectiveness of Pokdarwis in fostering community independence. In addition, the development of tourism villages in Batu City is also directed toward creating educational and thematic tourism destinations. This approach aims to attract tourists while simultaneously empowering the local community through the independent management of village potential.

Overall, community independence, as a form of empowerment in the development of tourism villages in Batu City, is a crucial factor in determining the success and sustainability of these destinations. Through active participation and collaboration, local communities can optimize their village potential, improve economic well-being, and preserve local cultural values. Therefore, this study aims to analyze community independence as a form of empowerment in the development of tourism villages in Batu City, East Java.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals and communities regarding community independence as a form of empowerment in the development of tourism villages in Batu City. Batu City was selected as the research site due to the significant efforts made by the local government over the past five years to implement community empowerment initiatives through tourism village development, aiming to enhance community awareness and participation.

This study focused on four tourism villages: Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo. These villages have evolved into popular tourist destinations, attracting visitors from various regions across Indonesia. Data collection was conducted using the following methods: a) In-depth interviews were conducted through direct face-to-face interactions using a semi-structured interview guide, allowing informants the flexibility to share their experiences and perspectives in a detailed and meaningful manner. The interview questions were organized based on the three main dimensions of community independence that formed the core focus of the study, namely: 1) self-capacity. Questions in this dimension aimed to explore the extent to which community members possess the knowledge, skills, and confidence to manage tourism potential independently. The information sought included their ability to identify local attractions, manage community-based tourism enterprises, and design innovative tourism products aligned with the unique characteristics of their village; 2) collective responsibility. This dimension focused on understanding the level of community involvement in collective activities that support the sustainability of tourism villages. It covered participation in village meetings, community work (gotong royong), preservation of local traditions, as well as engagement in the promotion and management of culturally based tourism events; and 3) thinking and acting ability. Questions in this category were designed to assess the degree of community initiative in offering ideas, making decisions, and taking concrete actions in tourism village development. A total of 24 informants participated in this study, selected through non-probability purposive sampling based on their active involvement in community empowerment activities. They included representatives from the Batu City Tourism Office, village heads (from Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo), tourism village managers, and local business owners in these villages; b) Non-participant observation, in which the researchers observed the implementation of community empowerment activities in the tourism village development process without directly engaging in the activities; and c) Documentary analysis, where researchers collected data by reviewing historical records, written documents, photographs, and other relevant materials related to community empowerment in tourism villages. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1984), which includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification (Sugiyono, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community Capacity in Tourism Village Development

The community is one of the key components that play an important role in the development of tourism villages. As hosts and beneficiaries of empowerment programs, community members must have the capacity to manage and utilize the potential of their villages to support tourism village development (Jasmin et al., 2024). Community capacity includes the abilities, capabilities, and skills required to implement tourism village development programs and activities sustainably (Desmita, 2009; Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022). Several forms of community capacity in tourism village development can be identified as follows:

a. Community capacity in exploring village potential

The empowerment initiatives led by the Batu City Tourism Office have significantly impacted the enhancement of community capacity in identifying, utilizing, and developing village potential as tourist attractions (Hayat, 2023). Community members have started to take the initiative to transform local resources, such as agriculture and plantations, into economically valuable tourist attractions (Nofiyanti et al., 2021; Zvavahera & Chigora, 2023). The developed village potential serves as a primary strength in supporting the sustainability of tourism villages and improving the welfare of the local community (Purnamawati, 2021).

The rapid development of tourism villages aligns with the increasing number of visitors to Batu City. Tourists often discover unique aspects of villages that were previously unrecognized by the local community. As acknowledged by Yayuk Murniwati, a key figure in Punten Tourism Village, many places in her village possess attractions that appeal to visitors. By documenting and promoting the village's beauty through photos and videos, the community can showcase tourism potential that has not been optimally utilized (Interview, October 12, 2022). Furthermore, tourism villages have various resources that can be developed according to their characteristics. However, this development cannot be carried out individually. The community requires institutions that play a role in managing, developing, and marketing tourism village potential. Stefani Karina, a practitioner from Sidomulyo Tourism Village, emphasized that without institutional support, tourism villages struggle to grow. With proper institutions in place, various village potentials can be packaged into tourism packages, complemented by facilities such as homestays, enabling tourists to spend more time and money in the village (Interview, September 10, 2022).

Not all communities in the four tourism villages of Batu City—Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo—can fully explore and utilize their village potential. Only some have successfully developed their resources into tourist attractions. The development of village potential varies across different areas, depending on the characteristics of the available resources and the opportunities for tourist visits. Some examples of successfully developed tourist attractions in Batu City's tourism villages can be seen in the following images:

Figure 1. BJM Tourist Attraction in Bumiaji Tourism Village
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2021

Figure 2. Flower Cultivation in Sidomulyo Tourism Village
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2021

Figure 3. Kungkuk Tourist Attraction in Punten Tourism Village
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2021

Figure 4. Bondesa in Tulungrejo Tourism Village
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2021

Based on the figures above, some community members had successfully explored and developed their village's potential into attractive and economically valuable tourist attractions. Each tourism village in Batu

City—Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo—has its own unique strengths, leading to different development approaches.

For example, in Bumiaji Tourism Village (Figure 1), the community has transformed Batu Jati Mas (BJM) into a recreational area that was previously used for vegetable farming. Visitors can enjoy various attractions, including amusement rides, swimming, viewing teak trees, and tasting BJM's signature culinary offerings. This tourism development has created job and business opportunities in the tourism sector for the local community. In Sidomulyo Tourism Village (Figure 2), flower farmers have turned flower cultivation into a tourist attraction. Visitors can learn how to plant, care for, and purchase flowers as souvenirs. This initiative provides economic benefits for farmers and enhances the appeal of the tourism village. In Punten Tourism Village (Figure 3), the Kungkuk tourist attraction has been developed in a rice field area with a mountain backdrop. The local community offers various tourism activities, such as outbound adventures, orange-picking tours, fishing, and village tours, all packaged into attractive tourist experiences. Meanwhile, in Tulungrejo Tourism Village (Figure 4), the Bondesa concept has been established as a center for tourism activities, providing dining facilities, meeting rooms, and children's play areas with scenic natural views and surrounding apple orchards.

The community's efforts in exploring and developing tourism village potential aim to improve the local economy and overall well-being. This development reflects the community's capacity to utilize local resources and seize opportunities from Batu City's growing tourism sector. According to Soetomo (2014), village potential development is based on three key aspects: 1) The evolving needs of the community in line with changing times, including the transformation of villages into tourist attractions; 2) The development of potential, resources, and opportunities over time, influenced by external factors that enable tourism village growth; and 3) The pursuit of more profitable ways to utilize village potential. With these three aspects in place, communities are encouraged to develop tourism potential to attract more visitors and generate sustainable economic benefits for Batu City's tourism villages.

b. Community capacity in establishing tourism businesses

Community empowerment aims to create individuals who are independent in their attitudes and actions. The empowerment programs implemented by the Batu City Tourism Office encourage community participation in the development of tourism villages. In line with this, the community has begun to take the initiative to establish tourism-related businesses by offering various tourism products and services, both to increase income and to meet the needs of tourists.

The change in administrative village status to tourism villages, as seen in Bumiaji, Sidomulyo, Punten, and Tulungrejo, has created opportunities for the community to optimize the use of local resources. With the available potential, community members are motivated to develop tourism-based businesses. This is acknowledged by Hariadi, an agro-tourism entrepreneur in Bumiaji Village, who emphasizes the importance of integrating eco-tourism, economy, and social aspects in his business. He also employs 19 local workers, the majority of whom are farmers (Interview, August 1, 2022). Similarly, Yudi, a producer of Batu's signature souvenirs, utilizes apples as the main ingredient for various processed products, adapting to the growing tourism sector in Batu City (Interview, September 5, 2022). These testimonials indicate that the community has the initiative and capability to start businesses based on their village's potential. The key factors driving them include the availability of agricultural land that can be developed into tourist attractions and a strong motivation for entrepreneurship. Additionally, community participation in empowerment programs further strengthens this drive, enabling them to optimize village resources to attract tourists.

Before starting a business, the community first identifies village potential that can be developed into tourism products, such as agriculture, plantations, culinary ventures (cafés), and accommodations. The utilization of this potential aims to attract tourists to visit and spend money in the village. Tofa, an apple-picking tourism entrepreneur in Tulungrejo Village, exemplifies how he leveraged apple farming as a tourist attraction. According to him, managing an apple-picking tourism business requires a deep understanding so that tourists not only enjoy the experience but also gain education about different apple varieties and cultivation techniques (Interview, September 5, 2022). Yayuk Murniwati, a tourism entrepreneur in Punten Village, also sees opportunities in the high demand for live-in tourism packages. Together with her team, she developed a structured system and services, conducted trial guest visits, and then evaluated and refined the services for future visitors (Interview, October 12, 2022). These interviews illustrate that the community has the initiative and capacity to establish tourism businesses, starting with identifying village potential and understanding tourist needs. The types of businesses developed are diverse, including tourist attractions, tourism packages, culinary ventures, and accommodations (homestays).

In developing businesses, the community is encouraged to utilize tourism village potential, whether in the form of natural resources such as agriculture and plantations or cultural and traditional aspects that appeal to tourists (Hariyadi et al., 2024). Additionally, the decision to start a business is influenced by the demand from tourists visiting the tourism villages. The variety of village potentials, coupled with the increasing number of

tourist visits, creates significant opportunities for the community to engage in entrepreneurship (Ciolac et al., 2022). The presence of various businesses with diverse products not only fulfills tourists' needs during their visits but also provides economic benefits to the local community.

The initiative and enthusiasm of the communities in tourism villages such as Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo in establishing tourism businesses reflect their independence in supporting tourism village development. However, not all community members have the same capacity to do so. The decision to start a business is heavily influenced by their willingness to take risks, innovate, and make decisions that support the sustainability of tourism businesses in their villages. According to research by Suwena and Widyatmaja (2017), the primary factors determining the success of tourism-based businesses in tourism villages were the community's readiness to manage businesses professionally and innovatively. Their study found that communities with access to training, technical guidance, and mentoring are better prepared to face business competition in the tourism sector. This aligns with findings in Batu City, where empowerment programs that include entrepreneurship training and digital marketing have enhanced the competitiveness of tourism village businesses. Furthermore, a study conducted by Nugroho et al. (2018) indicated that the sustainability of tourism businesses in tourism villages is highly dependent on the support of local governments and community collaboration. Their research on several tourism villages in East Java found that partnerships between communities, government, and tourism industry stakeholders can enhance business sustainability and the attractiveness of tourism villages. This highlights the importance of synergy among various parties in supporting rural tourism-based economic growth.

c. Community capacity in building cooperation networks

The development of tourism villages and businesses requires strong cooperation and networks to achieve success. The local community, as managers of tourism villages, has established partnerships with various tourism stakeholders, both within and outside the tourism village (Bhatta & Joshi, 2023). This collaboration supports business sustainability, expands promotion, and enhances tourism product marketing.

Hariadi, a guava-picking tourism entrepreneur in Bumiaji Village, emphasized the importance of cooperation with local communities, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and various other parties to strengthen the development of tourism villages (Interview, August 1, 2022). Meanwhile, Yudi, a souvenir entrepreneur in Bumiaji Village, added that building business networks and partnerships is a key strategy for improving product marketing (Interview, September 5, 2022). Additionally, Stefani Karina from Sidomulyo Village highlighted the importance of collaboration between tourism villages, such as linking apple-picking tourism with ornamental plant tourism and off-road activities, to meet tourist demands (Interview, September 10, 2022). These interviews indicated that cooperation allows business actors to complement each other in offering products and services to tourists. Furthermore, collaboration among various stakeholders—including local communities, SMEs, and between tourism villages—is the key to sustainable tourism village development and marketing. This collaborative approach not only enhances tourism appeal but also contributes to economic growth and local cultural preservation. A study by Prasetyo and Sukmana (2024) confirmed that tourism village development based on the penta-helix model—involving academics, businesses, communities, government, and media—is effective in optimizing local potential and improving community welfare. Additionally, research by Fadillah and Ginting (2024) showed that collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector in tourism development based on community empowerment can enhance local economic welfare and cultural preservation.

Every business actor in a tourism village has limitations in terms of the products they offer, making cooperation a solution to expand market access and meet tourist demand. In various tourism villages in Batu City, such as Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo, cooperative practices remain traditional. Business actors rely on direct communication and trust without formal written agreements. The community prioritizes mutually beneficial principles, such as offering special prices to business partners who help market tourism products.

A study conducted by Prabowo et al. (2022) showed that the success of tourism villages is greatly influenced by the form of cooperation established between business actors, the government, and local communities. The study found that tourism villages with formal cooperation systems, such as written agreements and regulatory support, tend to have more stable economic growth compared to those relying solely on trust and informal communication. Additionally, research by Nugroho & Purnomo (2021) asserted that tourism villages actively networking with the private sector and academics have a higher competitive advantage in attracting tourists and enhancing tourism product innovation. Therefore, tourism villages in Batu City should consider strengthening a more structured cooperation model to improve their sustainability and competitiveness.

From an empowerment perspective, the ability of the community to build cooperation networks reflects their independence in managing businesses within tourism villages. The development of tourism villages cannot progress in isolation without partnerships with various stakeholders. Each tourism village in Batu City has

different strategies for establishing cooperation, but their main objective remains the same: to improve businesses and develop local products to be more competitive in the tourism market.

Collaboration in tourism village development not only facilitates product marketing but also enhances competitiveness and economic sustainability for the community. According to research by Widiastuti & Suryanto (2021), tourism villages that implement cooperation networks with various parties tend to experience a more significant increase in tourist visits compared to those developing independently. Through collaboration with business actors, the government, and the community, tourism villages can expand their promotional reach and gain access to business management and marketing assistance. Furthermore, a study by Nugroho et al. (2022) indicates that tourism villages actively partnering with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can boost the local economy and create new job opportunities. Thus, building and expanding cooperation networks not only impact economic growth but also create a more inclusive and competitive tourism business ecosystem that supports the development of tourism villages in Batu City.

Collective Responsibility of the Community in Developing a Tourism Village

The existence of tourism villages is inseparable from the role of the community as the primary stakeholder in developing the village's potential and resources. The community understands both the potential and challenges of the village and requires cooperation in managing the tourism village. Social interaction is the key to building shared responsibility, as stated by Anogoro and Widiyanti (1990), who argue that without social interaction, there would be no life and cooperation within society.

Figure 5. Cleaning Activity in Bumiaji Tourism Village
Source: Tourism Village Management, 2021

Figure 6. Water Source Blessing Ceremony in Sidomulyo Tourism Village
Source: Times Indonesia, 2021

Figure 7. Cultural Carnival Activity in Punten Tourism Village
Source: Radarmalang.jawapos.com, 2022

Figure 8. Ngudek Jenang Tradition in Tulungrejo Tourism Village
Source: Batuhits.com, 2022

In the tourism villages of Batu City, such as Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo, shared responsibility is realized through various activities, including village tourism deliberations, promotions, community service work, and event organization. These activities are carried out voluntarily and collaboratively, as expressed by Stefani Karina from the Sidomulyo tourism village. She mentioned that the community often contributes funds to support various events that are not financed by the village budget (Interview, September 10, 2022, 7:00 PM WIB). This was reinforced by Yayuk Murniwati from the Punten tourism village, who stated that community awareness grows along with the economic benefits they experience, encouraging them to be more active in tourism village activities (Interview, October 12, 2022). The interview results indicate that the development of tourism villages is a shared responsibility realized through voluntary

community involvement in various activities. This aligns with Burhanudin's (2000) statement that responsibility reflects the community's ability to carry out tasks based on awareness and concern. In practice, the implementation of responsibility varies in each tourism village in Batu City, depending on the role of each community member. The main principle of this shared responsibility is the community's commitment to supporting the development of tourism villages.

The community in Batu City, including in the tourism villages of Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo, has demonstrated shared responsibility in developing tourism villages. Their involvement takes various forms, depending on their level of understanding and capacity to fulfill these responsibilities. Below is an image illustrating community participation as a manifestation of responsibility in the development of tourism villages in Batu City.

Based on the figures above, it can be explained that the community in the Bumiaji tourism village (Figure 5) regularly conducts environmental cleaning activities to maintain the comfort of visitors. This activity is carried out voluntarily as a form of concern for the sustainability of the tourism village. Community participation in cleaning activities reflects their responsibility in creating a clean, comfortable, and beautiful environment in the Bumiaji tourism village. A clean tourism village contributes to a pleasant atmosphere for both residents and visitors. In the Sidomulyo tourism village (Figure 6), community responsibility is demonstrated through the organization of the *Selamatan Sumber Air* (water source blessing ceremony). This ancestral tradition is a form of gratitude to God for the abundance of water sources, which serve as a vital resource for the community. During this event, villagers conduct a *Bersih Desa* (village cleansing ritual), which takes place once a year, specifically on *Selasa Kliwon* in the month of *Ruwah* (according to the Javanese calendar). The ceremony is followed by a *Kenduri*, where each resident voluntarily contributes offerings such as rice, side dishes, vegetables, and *ayam ingkung* (a traditional whole chicken dish). The community's active participation reflects their commitment to preserving and honoring ancestral traditions.

Meanwhile, in the Punten tourism village (Figure 7), community responsibility is evident in their participation in the annual cultural carnival. This event aims to showcase the village's potential, with a different theme each year, yet always connected to local culture and traditions. The community actively participates with enthusiasm, presenting cultural performances and voluntarily funding their involvement to enhance the festivities. In the Tulungrejo tourism village (Figure 8), shared responsibility is embodied through the tradition of *Ngudek Jenang*, a village ritual held to pray for protection from illness. The community actively takes part in this event as a means of strengthening social ties. This activity is not only conducted at the village level but is also rotated among different neighborhood units (*RW*), ensuring broad community participation.

The active involvement of the community in tourism village activities in Batu City demonstrates that the concept of community-based tourism (CBT) is highly relevant in this context. According to Suansri (2003), CBT emphasizes active community participation in planning, managing, and benefiting from the tourism sector sustainably. This aligns with previous research findings highlighting the importance of *sense of belonging* and *social cohesion* in increasing community participation in tourism activities (Okazaki, 2008). The sustainability of tourism villages in Batu City does not solely rely on natural resources and cultural attractions but also on how the community, as the main stakeholder, feels a sense of ownership and responsibility in managing their tourism villages. Strong social interaction and collective awareness, fostered through various voluntary activities, indicate that *social capital* plays a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of tourism villages (Putnam, 1993). Therefore, strengthening community capacity through education, training, and the reinforcement of village tourism institutions serves as the foundation for optimizing and sustaining community participation in tourism development.

Community Thinking and Acting Ability in Developing Tourism Village

The independence of the tourism village community is reflected in their ability to think and act in addressing issues related to the development of the tourism village. This ability is acquired through participation in empowerment programs organized by the Batu City Tourism Office. In developing tourism villages, the community demonstrates its independence by providing suggestions, making decisions, and implementing activities that enhance attractions and tourism experiences. This aligns with Widjajanti (2011), who stated that community independence is characterized by the ability to think, decide, and act independently in solving problems by utilizing available resources.

An independent community consists of individuals who can act based on what they consider appropriate and beneficial. Although the decision may not always be correct or immediately solve problems, the willingness to take action itself reflects independence (Desmita, 2009). According to Sulistiyani (2004), independence is the ability to act autonomously, demonstrated through thought, decision-making, and action in overcoming challenges using available resources. These resources include cognitive, conative, psychomotor, affective, as well as physical and material aspects.

The communities in the four tourism villages of Batu City—Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo—have exhibited independence by actively participating in the development of their villages. This is

evident in their involvement in providing input and suggestions for village tourism development. The community is given opportunities to voice their aspirations during meetings or discussions addressing various tourism-related issues, whether for evaluation purposes or the proposal of development ideas. Stefani Karina, a manager of the Sidomulyo tourism village, stated in an interview:
"The community often provides input and suggestions to the village authorities for the development of the tourism village. These inputs and suggestions are usually conveyed during important moments or before village activities take place, such as village blessings, other rituals, or formal forums held in the village. Those involved include community leaders, traditional figures, and community representatives." (Interview, September 10, 2022).

This statement was reinforced by Yayuk Murniwati, a tourism practitioner from the Punten tourism village, who said:
"...since becoming a tourism village, there has always been a musrenbang (development planning deliberation), and similar village discussions. These village meetings are regularly scheduled. There is also a dedicated tourism village institution meeting. During these discussions, there are sharing sessions and joint evaluations between the management and the community. These activities are conducted regularly." (Interview, October 12, 2022).

Most community input and suggestions pertain to the development of tourism village products and ensuring equal involvement of residents in both supporting and benefiting from the tourism village. According to Tofa, the community has been able to provide input regarding tourism village management, including proposals for a cleaner and better-managed rest area. This suggestion was directly submitted to the village management during an official forum as a consideration for improving tourism facilities in Tulungrejo (Interview, September 5, 2022). Meanwhile, Tarom, an informant from the Bumiaji tourism village, noted that the community has provided suggestions for improving the quality of tourism services. These proposals were presented during village deliberations involving tourism business actors, tourism village administrators, and relevant stakeholders in tourism village development (Interview, September 5, 2022).

The community conveys their input and suggestions regarding tourism village development in various meetings or discussions because they feel a sense of ownership (*sense of belonging*) toward their village's potential and understand the needs and challenges in the field. The ideas and suggestions provided are not only considered in program implementation but also play a role in decision-making for the sustainable development of tourism villages. According to Sudriamunawar (2006), high community participation significantly influences the success of tourism village development programs. Development is not solely determined by the government but also relies on community involvement in realizing planned programs.

The communities of Sidomulyo, Bumiaji, Punten, and Tulungrejo tourism villages have demonstrated their ability to think and act in the development of their tourism villages, although not all residents can participate. Limited understanding and knowledge about tourism villages remain obstacles to expressing ideas and proposals. However, a portion of the community continues to provide suggestions and input to tourism village managers to ensure that development programs are more beneficial and aligned with residents' needs. Thus, the outcomes achieved can be broadly felt by the community in accordance with their collective expectations.

CONCLUSION

Community independence is a key factor in the sustainability of tourism villages in Batu City. This study identifies three main aspects of independence: (1) Self-Capacity, which refers to the community's ability to manage and develop the potential of tourism villages into attractive destinations. This capacity includes the ability to explore village potential, establish tourism businesses, provide services to tourists, and build collaborative networks; (2) Collective Responsibility, reflected in community participation in community service activities, promotions, and village discussions to maintain cleanliness and tourist appeal; and (3) Thinking and Acting Ability, where the community takes the initiative to provide input on tourism village development and make strategic decisions independently.

The development of tourism villages in Batu City requires more effective empowerment strategies to enhance community independence. The Batu City government needs to collaborate with the private sector and academics in organizing training and mentoring programs, such as community-based business management, digital marketing, and financial management. The community is also encouraged to establish collaborative networks to expand market reach and increase the competitiveness of tourism products.

This study has limitations in terms of location coverage, as it only focuses on four tourism villages in Batu City, making the findings not fully representative of other areas with different characteristics. Additionally, the qualitative approach used in this research focuses more on community experiences and perceptions without quantitative data support to objectively measure economic and social impacts. Therefore, future research is

recommended to adopt a quantitative and longitudinal approach, expand the coverage of tourism villages, and evaluate the effectiveness of empowerment programs to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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