

# Community Participation in the Development of the Petai River Tourism Village, Kampar District

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**Abstract.** The development of community-based tourism villages is one of the strategies for sustainable tourism development in Indonesia. The success of tourism village development is largely determined by the level of participation of local communities as the main actors. This study aims to analyze the forms of community participation, supporting and inhibiting factors of participation, and their implications for the development of Sungai Petai Tourism Village, Kampar District. The study uses an interpretive paradigm with a descriptive qualitative approach within the Community Based Tourism (CBT) framework. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Research informants were determined purposively, including village officials, tourism village managers, community leaders, youth, and local business actors. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that community participation has occurred but is still dominated by the implementation stage of activities, while involvement in planning and decision-making is still limited. Supporting factors for participation include the natural potential of Sungai Petai and the community's spirit of mutual cooperation, while inhibiting factors include limited human resource capacity, low access to information, and non-inclusive tourism village management institutions. This study recommends developing a more inclusive model of community participation through strengthening village tourism institutions, particularly by examining in-depth the mechanisms of community involvement in the planning and decision-making stages to achieve sustainable village tourism development.

**Keywords:** *Community Participation, Village Tourism, Community-Based Tourism, Sungai Petai.*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector in the economic and social development of many countries, including Indonesia. In recent decades, tourism has become more than just an economic activity focused on increasing tourist arrivals and foreign exchange earnings, but also an instrument of sustainable development that must balance economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects (Kusherdiana, 2021; UNWTO, 2018). This paradigm shift has led to the emergence of more inclusive and sustainable approaches to tourism development, one of which is community-based tourism.

Community-based tourism developed in response to the weaknesses of conventional tourism models, which tend to be top-down, capital-intensive, and provide little space for local communities to play a key role in development. Tourism models centered on investors and the government often lead to marginalization of local communities, unequal distribution of economic benefits, and pressure on the local environment and culture (Ardianti & Eprilianto, 2022; Djaja & Kusherdiana, 2025). In this context, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) emerged, positioning local communities as subjects of development with strategic roles in the planning, management, and supervision of tourism activities.

The development of tourist villages is one concrete implementation of the concept of community-based tourism in rural areas. Tourist villages not only offer the attractions of natural beauty and cultural richness, but also serve as instruments for socio-economic empowerment through the sustainable utilization of local potential. (Amalina & Listyorini,

2023; Kuserdyana, 2021) Through the development of tourist villages, communities are expected to improve economic well-being, strengthen social cohesion, and preserve the environment and local cultural identity.

Community participation is a key element in the development of sustainable tourism villages. Participation is not only defined as community involvement in physical activities or program implementation, but also encompasses involvement in decision-making, the expression of aspirations, resource management, and the evaluation and monitoring of development (Ardianti & Eprilianto, 2022). Thus, community participation reflects the level of empowerment and capacity of communities to control the direction of tourism development in their own areas.

In the context of tourism villages, community participation plays a strategic role in ensuring that tourism development aligns with local needs, values, and interests. Actively involved communities tend to have a stronger sense of ownership of the destination, thus contributing to the sustainable management and preservation of local natural resources and culture (Amalina & Listyorini, 2023; Ubaidulloh & Purwanto, 2024). Conversely, low community participation can lead to the development of tourism villages artificially and oriented towards the interests of certain groups.

Several studies have shown that tourism villages developed with a high level of community participation tend to be more socially and economically sustainable. Community involvement in the planning and management of tourism villages contributes to a more equitable distribution of economic benefits, increased local capacity, and strengthened village tourism institutions (Mulyan & Martoni, 2025; Ubaidulloh & Purwanto, 2024). Furthermore, inclusive participation also plays a role in minimizing social conflict and increasing the legitimacy of tourism development policies at the local level.

However, empirical reality shows that community participation in the development of tourism villages in Indonesia still faces various structural and cultural challenges. Many tourism villages formally promote a community-based concept, but in practice, community involvement remains limited to the implementation stage of activities, such as community service, the provision of informal services, or involvement in tourism events (Jamilah et al., 2025; Mulyan & Isnaeni, 2024). The role of the community in strategic planning and decision-making is often still dominated by the village government or specific management groups.

This situation indicates that community participation is still functional and has not yet reached the level of empowerment. Functional participation positions the community as the program implementer, while control over resources and development direction remains in the hands of dominant actors (Ardianti & Eprilianto, 2022). As a result, local potential is not optimally explored, and the goal of community empowerment through tourism villages is not fully achieved.

The phenomenon of suboptimal participation is also reflected in various local case studies. Research in Jembul Village, Mojokerto Regency, shows that tourism development remains concentrated on certain groups, resulting in uneven and exclusive community involvement (Agiatama & Maruf, 2024). This situation not only limits community access to the economic benefits of tourism but also weakens collective commitment to preserving the local environment and culture.

Theoretically, this situation contradicts the basic principles of community-based tourism, which emphasize local control, inclusive participation, and equitable distribution of benefits. Within the CBT framework, local communities should have a central position as planners, managers, and primary beneficiaries of tourism activities (Djaja & Kuserdyana, 2025). Therefore, analyzing the quality and dynamics of community participation is a crucial aspect in assessing the success of village tourism development.



2018; Pawan, 2021; Razali et al., 2024; Saikim & et al, 2024; Yusoff & et al., 2022) focus on river tourism and riverbank landscapes, as well as the relationship between space and community activities. Studies in areas such as Penang, Sabak Bernam, river valleys, river villages, and community engagement in riparian areas demonstrate how communities interact with river resources in tourism activities and the local economy. These studies examine the relationship between rivers, social identity, and the potential for developing river nature tourism.

3. The Purple Cluster focuses on sustainable development, rural areas, the environment, and conservation. Articles in this cluster discuss the sustainability of rural tourism, ecotourism integration, conservation, and environmental management (Hadiwijoyo, 2012; Inskip, 1991; Suansri, n.d.; Sunaryo, 2013; UNWTO, 2018). Serve as a conceptual reference. Studies on the socio-economic-ecological sustainability of tourist villages highlight the long-term impacts of destination development on the rural environment and the quality of life of local communities.
4. The Orange Cluster focuses on the discussion of tourists, perception, experience, and the epicenter. Articles in this cluster emphasize tourists as the primary subject of analysis. Topics include perception, experience, satisfaction, visitation patterns, and interactions between tourists and local communities. This study examines tourist villages more from a demand-side perspective than from a supply-side perspective.
5. The blue cluster focuses on economic development, benefits, livelihoods, and income. Articles in this cluster analyze the economic contribution of tourism villages to household income, job creation, poverty reduction, and livelihood diversification. The approach is often quantitative, examining the multiplier effect and benefit distribution within local communities.

The first novelty lies in the very specific research location chosen: Sungai Petai Tourism Village in Kampar Regency. Based on the bibliometric research map, Sungai Petai does not appear as a major node in the research network, while most previous studies have focused on Java, Bali, or neighboring countries such as Malaysia, with a general ecotourism theme. Therefore, this research presents a new contribution because studies on community participation in Sungai Petai Tourism Village in Kampar have not been widely conducted scientifically and published, thus closing a research gap in a location that has previously been underexplored by academic tourism studies.

The second novelty lies in the integration of two concepts typically studied separately: river-village tourism and community participation. Most previous studies have focused solely on community participation in tourism in general, or have examined river tourism without linking it to the social dynamics of village communities. This study combines these two approaches by examining how community participation occurs in the management of river tourism based on tourism villages, thus yielding a new perspective on the relationship between the natural attractions of rivers and the socio-economic involvement of local communities.

The third novelty lies in the research's spatial approach. Previous literature has focused more on broad regional scales, such as district, provincial, and even national levels, often overlooking the real dynamics occurring at the local level. This research specifically focuses on the micro-level, specifically the village/hamlet, Sungai Petai Village in Kampar, to gain a deeper understanding of community participation practices in river tourism development. This micro-approach allows researchers to capture social and cultural realities and patterns of community interaction that are not visible in macro-scale research.

This research gap highlights the need for a more in-depth study of the forms and levels of community participation in specific local contexts, including the influencing factors and their implications for the sustainability of tourism villages (Ubaidulloh & Purwanto, 2024).

Such analysis is crucial for strengthening the empirical basis for community-based tourism village development at the local level.

Based on the above description, this research focuses on analyzing community participation in the development of Sungai Petai Tourism Village, Kampar District. This research aims to examine the forms and levels of community participation, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and analyze its implications for sustainable tourism village development. Therefore, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of community-based tourism studies and practical contributions to the formulation of policies and strategies for inclusive and equitable tourism village development.

With this background, it is important to study it comprehensively community participation in the development of Sungai Petai tourist village because through this understanding, empowerment strategies, local capacity building, and tourism development policies can be formulated that are inclusive, socially just, and sustainable from both economic and environmental aspects.

## **B. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive–exploratory design to examine the forms, levels, and dynamics of community participation in the development of the Sungai Petai Tourism Village, Kampar District. The research was grounded in an interpretive paradigm and applied a naturalistic inquiry approach, allowing community participation to be understood as a contextual social process shaped by local social, cultural, and institutional conditions. The research site was purposively selected due to Sungai Petai Village’s early-stage tourism village development and active community involvement. Informants were determined using purposive sampling, including village officials, tourism village managers, community leaders, youth groups, local business actors, and residents directly or indirectly involved in tourism activities. Informants were selected based on their roles, knowledge of local social dynamics, and willingness to provide information.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant field observations, and document analysis, enabling the collection of rich and complementary data. Data analysis followed an iterative qualitative process consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with thematic categorization of key issues related to participation, actors, supporting and inhibiting factors, and development impacts. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, as well as limited member checking with key informants. This systematic approach enabled an in-depth and accurate understanding of community participation in tourism village development and supported the formulation of evidence-based conclusions and recommendations.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Overview of Community Participation in Sungai Petai Village**

Community participation in Sungai Petai Village can be understood as a form of social capital that is still in its developmental stage. Interviews with village officials, community leaders, and tourism village managers revealed that the values of mutual cooperation, social solidarity, and community engagement with the river environment remain relatively strong. These values are reflected in the community's willingness to participate in joint activities, particularly those related to environmental cleanliness and the implementation of community-based tourism activities.

However, observations and interviews indicate that this social capital has not been fully organized into a strong and inclusive institutional system within the tourism village. Community participation remains sporadic and has not been systematically integrated into the

planning and management of the tourism village. This situation makes community involvement highly dependent on the initiatives of specific individuals or groups, particularly youth groups and core tourism village managers.

This finding aligns with studies (A. Mulyan & Isnaeni, 2024) showing that community participation in many tourist villages in Indonesia still tends to be informal and not yet optimally institutionalized. Dependence on specific figures has the potential to undermine the sustainability of participation if not accompanied by strengthening inclusive and participatory institutions.

## **2. Forms and Levels of Community Participation in the Development of Sungai Petai Tourism Village**

Data analysis shows that community participation in Sungai Petai Village takes various forms, but is predominantly focused on implementation. The community is actively involved in river cleanup activities, tourism area development, and support for local tourism events. Furthermore, some residents also participate by providing informal services, such as parking, selling simple food and beverages, and renting tourist equipment. This involvement is primarily carried out by youth groups and communities with a direct economic interest in tourism activities. Interviews with informants from youth groups indicate that their participation is driven by a desire to capitalize on economic opportunities while also introducing the village's potential to outsiders. Field observations reinforce this finding, indicating that tourism activities are predominantly driven by youth groups acting as field leaders.

In contrast, community participation in the planning and decision-making stages remains relatively limited. The majority of informants stated that the planning process for developing tourism villages is primarily carried out by village officials and core management groups, while the general public is only involved to a limited extent through outreach forums or program announcements. This situation indicates that community participation tends to be functional, where the community acts as an implementer of activities, rather than as an actor who helps determine the direction and strategy for tourism village development.

Based on the community participation framework, these findings indicate that the level of participation in Sungai Petai Tourism Village has not yet reached the empowerment stage. The community does not yet have the space and capacity to fully participate in strategic decision-making, so their role remains limited to operational aspects.

## **3. Actors and Patterns of Community Involvement**

The research results show differences in the level of involvement between community groups. Youth are the most active and dominant actors in tourism village development. In addition to possessing energy and creativity, this group is also more open to innovation and new economic opportunities offered by the tourism sector. Village officials and tourism village managers serve as primary decision-makers, while local business actors participate selectively according to their respective economic interests.

In contrast, the involvement of other community groups, such as women and those not directly involved in tourism activities, remains relatively limited. This indicates an imbalance in participation that has the potential to hinder the inclusiveness of tourism village development. This imbalance is also reflected in the minimal community involvement in tourism planning and evaluation forums.

## **4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Community Participation**

The data analysis revealed several factors supporting community participation in the development of the Sungai Petai Tourism Village. The primary factor is the natural resources

of the Petai River, which are a source of pride for the community. The river is viewed not only as an economic asset but also as an integral part of the local community's identity and social life. Furthermore, the strong spirit of mutual cooperation serves as a crucial social capital in encouraging community involvement. The hope of increasing income and well-being through tourism activities is also a primary motivation for the community, particularly youth groups and local entrepreneurs. These factors demonstrate that, socially and culturally, Sungai Petai Village possesses sufficient foundational capital to develop a community-based tourism village.

On the other hand, this study identified several inhibiting factors that impact the quality and sustainability of community participation. The main obstacles include limited community capacity and knowledge regarding tourism village management, limited access to information related to tourism programs and planning, and the suboptimal institutional framework for inclusive tourism village management. Some communities still view tourism village development as solely the responsibility of the village government. This perception has resulted in a low sense of *ownership* in tourism villages, resulting in uneven community participation. These obstacles result in incidental community participation that relies on specific activities, rather than planned and sustainable participation.

##### **5. Implications of Community Participation in the Development of Tourism Villages**

The research results show that limited community participation, particularly in the planning and decision-making stages, has slowed the overall development of Sungai Petai Tourism Village. Despite its significant natural and social potential, the lack of community involvement in the strategic process has prevented the development of the tourism village from fully reflecting the needs and aspirations of the local community. Participation that is more operational than strategic also impacts the sustainability of tourism village management. Without active community involvement in decision-making, there is a risk of low long-term commitment to river environmental conservation and the development of tourism products based on local wisdom. This situation demonstrates that the quality of community participation is a key factor in determining the success and sustainability of tourism villages.

The findings of this study reinforce the view that the success of tourism village development is not determined by the amount of physical community involvement, but rather by the quality and depth of their participation throughout the entire tourism development cycle. This aligns with findings from (Wismaningtyas et al., 2022) *the Community-Based Tourism (CBT)* perspective, where communities ideally play a key role, involved from the planning stage, decision-making, implementation, and oversight of destination management. The results of the study in Sungai Petai Tourism Village indicate that tourism village development practices are still dominated by operational participation patterns, while the strategic dimension of participation has not yet developed optimally.

These conditions indicate that the development of Sungai Petai Tourism Village is still in the early stages of its transformation toward a comprehensive community-based tourism model. The dominant community participation during the implementation phase reflects a willingness and social readiness to participate, but this has not been matched by adequate capacity and participation at the planning and decision-making levels. In this context, community participation functions more as a supporting instrument for tourism activities, rather than as an empowerment mechanism that allows the community to independently determine the direction and goals of tourism village development.

This phenomenon aligns with findings (Husni & Safaat, 2019) in Teluk Bakau Village, where unequal participation led to weak tourism management and limited distribution of economic benefits. However, this study reveals a different nuance: the existence of relatively

strong social capital at the Sungai Petai community level, particularly through the role of youth groups. This social capital represents a strategic potential that can be further developed if facilitated through more inclusive and structured participation mechanisms.

**Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on Community Participation in the Development of Sungai Petai Tourism Village**

Study Aspects	Key Findings	Implications
Forms of Community Participation	Participation is dominant at the implementation stage (cleanliness, informal services, tourism events); planning participation is still limited.	Participation is functional, has not yet reached empowerment participation
Main Actor	Youth groups and some local business actors	Need to expand the involvement of other community groups
Supporting Factors	The natural potential of Sungai Petai, the spirit of mutual cooperation, hopes for economic improvement	Become social capital for the development of tourist villages
Inhibiting Factors	Limited human resource capacity, low access to information, institutions that are not yet inclusive	Inhibits active and ongoing participation
Impact on Tourism Development	Development is not yet optimal and does not fully reflect the aspirations of the community.	It is necessary to strengthen the role of the community in decision making.

The dominance of youth as the primary actors in participation indicates that age, energy, and economic orientation significantly influence the level of involvement in tourism activities. On the one hand, this is an advantage, as youth have the potential to be the driving force behind innovation and creativity in tourism villages. On the other hand, unequal involvement among community groups, such as women and non-business actors, has the potential to create social exclusion in tourism village management. This inequality requires critical examination, as it contradicts the basic principles of CBT, which emphasize inclusivity and equitable distribution of benefits.

Suboptimal community participation in the planning and decision-making stages also has implications for the legitimacy of village tourism development policies. When strategic decisions are largely determined by specific actors, community ownership of tourism programs tends to weaken (Aini et al., 2021; Juwita et al.,). Interviews indicate that some residents still view village tourism as a village government project, rather than a collective community effort. This perception has resulted in a low long-term community commitment to river environmental conservation and the development of tourism products based on local wisdom. From a sustainability perspective, research findings show that limited strategic community participation has the potential to hinder the long-term sustainability of tourist villages. Meanwhile, tourism management that does not fully reflect local aspirations tends to be vulnerable to conflicts of interest, decreased social support, and environmental degradation (Purnomo, 2018). These findings strengthen the argument that community participation is not only a normative necessity but also a functional prerequisite for the sustainability of village tourism.

This discussion of findings also highlights the importance of strengthening local human resource capacity as a prerequisite for improving the quality of participation. Limited community knowledge regarding village tourism governance, marketing, and environmental management is a major obstacle to transforming participation from a functional level to

empowerment (Putra, 2020). Therefore, participation cannot be separated from systematic efforts to improve tourism literacy and managerial skills in village communities. In addition to individual capacity, tourism village institutions play a strategic role in determining the quality of participation. Research findings indicate that the tourism village management institutions in Sungai Petai have not fully functioned as inclusive deliberative spaces. According to research findings, (Judijanto et al., 2023) the absence of clear and transparent participation mechanisms limits community access to decision-making processes. In this context, tourism village institutions need to be reoriented as collaborative platforms that bridge the interests of the village government, the community, and local businesses.

The results of this study have important implications for the formulation of village tourism development policies at the village and regional levels. These findings emphasize the need to shift the role of village government from a dominant actor to a facilitator of participation. Village governments need to create equal dialogue spaces through deliberation forums, participatory training, and ongoing mentoring. Furthermore, strengthening transparent and accountable village tourism institutions is a prerequisite for improving the quality of community participation. This approach aligns with research (Asmi, 2021) stating that the principle of participatory development should empower communities by treating them as active subjects, not passive objects; participatory development positions communities as subjects, not objects of development. A collaborative approach involving government, academics, and local communities is also needed to increase community capacity in managing tourism villages professionally and sustainably. Academic involvement can contribute to knowledge transfer, strengthening data-driven planning, and continuously evaluating tourism village management practices.

Overall, the discussion of the research findings confirms that the primary challenge in developing the Sungai Petai Tourism Village lies not in the lack of community participation, but rather in the quality, depth, and sustainability of that participation. Transforming participation from mere operational involvement to empowerment is a strategic agenda that must be systematically pursued. Thus, the tourism village will function not only as a tourist destination but also as a platform for social learning and sustainable community empowerment.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Community participation in the development of the Sungai Petai Tourism Village has been substantial but remains largely at a functional level, with communities primarily involved in operational activities rather than planning and decision-making processes. This limited role indicates that local communities have not yet been fully positioned as key stakeholders, potentially affecting policy legitimacy, program ownership, and development sustainability. While strong social capital, natural resources, and economic aspirations support participation, challenges such as limited human resource capacity, restricted access to information, and non-inclusive institutional arrangements hinder deeper engagement. Therefore, transforming community participation from functional to empowering through capacity building, inclusive governance, and transparent institutional strengthening is essential to ensure sustainable and community-based tourism development.

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