
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SUKALAKSANA VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

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Sukalaksana Village is one of the villages in Garut Regency, West Java Province, which still preserves local cultural values and develops local wisdom-based ecotourism potential. As a tourist village with the Saung Ciburial Tourism Village branding, Sukalaksana Village uses special communication methods to preserve and maintain their culture and make it the center of attention in developing ecotourism. The novelty of this study is that it highlights the communication strategies used by the people of Sukalaksana Village. Many studies only discuss cultural or ecotourism potential, but few specifically examine how communication between stakeholder is key to the success of cultural preservation and sustainable ecotourism. This study aims to understand how the communication strategies carried out by the people of Sukalaksana Village in preserving local cultural values while developing ecotourism potential rooted in local wisdom. Using a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that the Sukalaksana Village community implemented three strategies to preserve their culture and outlined three communication strategies used to develop ecotourism. In addition, cross-sectoral communication with the government, community, and tourists is key in the development of sustainable ecotourism. This communication strategy not only plays a role in preserving cultural identity but also strengthens community participation in ecotourism management. The conclusion of this research is that the success of Sukalaksana Village in preserving culture and developing ecotourism is strongly influenced by the communication strategy that is used to promote ecotourism. This strategy not only strengthens the community's cultural identity, but also creates economic opportunities through sustainable tourism. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for other villages in efforts to preserve culture and develop sustainable ecotourism through communication strategies.

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1. Introduction

Local culture is the identity and wealth of a nation that must be preserved, especially in the midst of globalization and modernization that has the potential to erode traditional values. Furthermore, culture is an integral part of a nation's national identity. National identity can be defined as the characteristics, uniqueness, or traits that distinguish a nation from other nations (Samongilailai & Utomo, 2024). This culture continues to evolve over time, influenced by people's desire for change and adaptation in cultural aspects.

Sukalaksana Village in Garut Regency, West Java, is one of the villages that has cultural wealth and faces considerable challenges in preserving local traditions and wisdom in the midst of changing times. On the other hand, the ecotourism potential in this village provides a strategic opportunity to improve community welfare while strengthening cultural preservation. Sukalaksana Village has a high commitment to local culture. Local cultures in Sukalaksana Village that are still preserved today include the Garut sheep agility competition, the martial art of Gajah Putih Mega Paksi Pusaka martial arts, the tradition of drinking *kewer tea*, *ngagogo*, and *kaulinan barudak lembur* (kabarulem) (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024). In addition, the success of Sukalaksana Village in preserving local culture is also accompanied by its success in developing ecotourism under the name Saung Ciburiat Tourism Village. Tourism village can also be referred to as an area related to an area or various local wisdom in the form of customs, village potential, culture, and community practices that aim for social and economic benefits for the community (Setiati, 2023).

Ecotourism development should not only focus on economic aspects, but also consider social and cultural aspects to ensure environmental sustainability and preservation of local identity (Permata et al., 2023). In this process, communication plays an important role as a bridge between cultural preservation and ecotourism development. An effective communication strategy can raise awareness, build participation, and strengthen collaboration between the community, government, and various stakeholders (Romli & Purwanto, 2025). One of the communication strategies that have been implemented by the Sukalaksana Village community in developing ecotourism is a collaborative communication strategy based on the principle of "*tanggung renteng-tanggung baut*". This principle defines that if one villager does not follow the rules that have been set, it will have an impact on other villagers in the vicinity, and they will be subject to social sanctions, such as being ostracized (Prasetyo et al., 2017). Previous studies have shown that the success of cultural preservation and ecotourism development is strongly influenced by the communication patterns applied by the community. For example, the people of Sade Hamlet in Central Lombok succeeded in preserving the authenticity of traditional houses through deliberation, cultural messages, and active community involvement in every preservation activity (Swastini, 2021). Similarly, participatory and structured communication patterns in Ketapang Village were able to build community support for the development of mangrove ecotourism areas by involving digital media and cross-sector collaboration (Romli & Purwanto, 2025).

Communication has played a central role in preserving local culture, because through cultural communication, values, principles and attitudes can continue to be passed down from one generation to the next. This makes culture a continuous process. Therefore, a well-designed communication strategy is the key to preserving culture while developing the potential of ecotourism in Sukalaksana Village.

Based on this background, this research is important to find out how the communication strategy of the Sukalaksana Village community in preserving culture and developing ecotourism. Previous research has rarely examined how integrated communication strategies based on local wisdom can simultaneously preserve culture and develop ecotourism in West Java. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for other villages in efforts to preserve culture and develop sustainable ecotourism.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods. Ethnography is the study of culture and society by understanding and studying life in their environment (Spradley, 2016). The focus of this research is to understand how the people of Sukalaksana Village preserve their culture and how this is communicated to the next generation to ensure sustainability and develop ecotourism. Data collection was conducted over three months through purposive sampling, by conducting interviews and observations with key figures, including the Sukalaksana Village Head, the management of BUMDes Bina Laksana, the management of Pokdarwis (tourism awareness group), cultural figures, youth, and women's groups who play a role in creative economic activities. The research was conducted in Sukalaksana Village, Samarang District, Garut Regency, West Java Province. Data collection combined direct observation of community behavior and semi-structured interviews to explore communication strategies in preserving culture and developing ecotourism. Data analysis consisted of four stages: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, component analysis, and cultural theme analysis (Spradley, 2016). The findings show that an important aspect of how the people of Sukalaksana Village preserve their culture and communicate it to the next generation is to develop ecotourism.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Concept of Preserving Culture in Sukalaksana Village.

1. Empowering the Creative Economy

Sukalaksana Village in Samarang Subdistrict, Garut Regency, is one example of a village that has successfully developed its creative economic potential based on local wisdom to preserve and promote local culture. As a tourist village promoting nature- and culture-based tourism, Sukalaksana has proven that creative economic empowerment not only improves community welfare but also serves as a key site for preserving Sundanese culture amid the tide of modernization (Setiati, 2023).

Initially, the majority of Sukalaksana Village residents relied on traditional agriculture for their livelihood. However, as the tourism village program developed, the community began shifting toward the creative economy sector, such as handicrafts, local cuisine, and souvenir production. The village government, in collaboration with BUMDes Binalaksana, established a UMKM center to support residents' creative economic activities, thereby creating new job opportunities and increasing community income (Setiati, 2023). Additionally, women in the village are actively involved in handicrafts, sewing, and the culinary sector, which present significant potential for creating jobs and improving family economics.

One of the key innovations in creative economic empowerment in Sukalaksana is the development of Shibori batik with local motifs, particularly the kewer plant (Soemaryani et al., 2024). The Shibori batik training program involving local youth and women not only improves technical skills, but also builds a community of budding batik makers who play a role in developing the village's creative products. The kewer motif was chosen because it has historical and philosophical value to the people of Sukalaksana. The kewer plant, which was once considered worthless, is now elevated as a local identity through Pangrod Sukalaksana batik. In addition to being a superior product, this batik is also part of a cultural tourism

package offered to tourists, while introducing local wisdom to a wider market (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024).

Creative economic empowerment in Sukalaksana has had a significant impact, both economically and socio-culturally. The community not only earns additional income, but is also increasingly proud of their cultural heritage. Continuous training and mentoring, collaboration with universities, and support from the village government are key to the success of this transformation. Sukalaksana Village is now known as a competitive and sustainable culture-based tourism village. This success is expected to inspire other villages in developing creative economy to preserve and promote local culture.

2. Preservation Through Local Wisdom

Cultural preservation is an important issue during globalization and modernization. Sukalaksana Village, located in Samarang Subdistrict, Garut Regency, is a concrete example of how local wisdom can be used as a foundation for cultural preservation efforts as well as improving community welfare. The village is not only known for its natural beauty, but also rich in traditions, arts, and innovations rooted in local wisdom that continue to be preserved and developed.

Local wisdom in Sukalaksana Village is reflected in various aspects of community life. Traditional values, customs, ethics, and even architectural designs are still well preserved. The local community is famous for its hospitality (someah), manners, and politeness that characterize Sundanese culture. This attitude is not only an identity but also an attraction for tourists seeking an authentic and peaceful rural atmosphere (Setiati, 2023).

One notable form of cultural preservation is the Garut Sheep attraction, which has become an icon and source of pride for the village. This tradition is not merely entertainment but also rich in historical and social value, strengthening a sense of community and local identity. Additionally, Sukalaksana Village has successfully combined cultural preservation with economic innovation through village tourism programs and the development of local products. The Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) Bina Laksana serves as the main driving force, with various business units such as clean water management, Kewer tea cultivation, aromatic coffee, vegetable farming like cabbage with daily production reaching tens of tons, and village tourism (Sofian et al., 2022).

The concept of village tourism promoted by Sukalaksana Village is based on ecology and education, named Saung Ciburial. Visitors not only enjoy the natural beauty but are also invited to participate in activities such as planting Chinese cabbage, working in the fields, bathing sheep, and joining village treks to gain a deeper understanding of the life and culture of the Sundanese people. Performances of art and cultural traditions are still regularly held, serving as both an educational tool and entertainment that strengthens the village's cultural identity.

The preservation of culture through local wisdom in Sukalaksana directly impacts the improvement of the community's economy. BUMDes has been able to create jobs, increase the village's original income, and encourage productivity and quality of life for residents. In addition, Sukalaksana's success in preserving local wisdom and developing a tourist village has earned the village various awards, such as the 2021 BRILian Village Champion (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024).

3. Integration of Culture and Tourism

Sukalaksana Village in Samarang District, Garut Regency, is a prime example of how the integration of culture and tourism can serve as an effective strategy for preserving and developing local culture. The village is known as Saung Ciburial Tourism Village, which promotes a nature- and culture-based tourism concept, entirely managed by the local community. Through the development of the tourism village, Sukalaksana has not only been able to improve the economic well-being of the community but also preserve traditional customs and local wisdom (Setiati, 2023).

Sukalaksana village has a well-preserved Sundanese cultural heritage, including the martial art of pencak silat, kenduri traditions, and handicrafts such as batik, vetiver weaving,

and blacksmithing. In addition, the serene rural landscape with rice paddies, fields, and natural springs is a major attraction for tourists seeking an authentic Sundanese village experience (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024).

Tourism in Sukalaksana Village offers not only natural beauty but also educational and participatory experiences. Tourists can learn to plant and harvest vegetables, particularly cabbage, which is the village's main commodity, as well as participate in cooking nasi liwet and farming activities in the fields alongside the villagers (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024). This educational tourism initiative serves as a means of cultural preservation, as local traditions and knowledge are directly passed on to visitors.

The development of tourism villages in Sukalaksana is carried out with a local wisdom-based approach. The village government, BUMDes, and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) play an active role in designing tourism programs that highlight the cultural values and traditions of the Sundanese community. For example, every tourist who comes will be accompanied by a Pokdarwis member to get closer to local life and culture, from agricultural activities to traditional ceremonies (Nurussahar, 2020).

Legal recognition and government support are also important factors in the success of this integration. Sukalaksana Village has been recognized as a Tourism Village by the Garut Regency Tourism and Culture Office, and has received awards from various national institutions such as the Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia (ADWI) and the BRILian Village Award (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024). These awards not only enhance the village's image but also motivate the community to continue preserving their culture.

The integration of culture and tourism in Sukalaksana Village has had a significant positive impact, both economically and socially. Economically, the village has increased community income through the tourism sector, agrotourism agriculture, and the development of creative products based on local culture. Meanwhile, from a socio-cultural perspective, the community has become increasingly aware of the importance of preserving traditions and local identity as valuable assets amid the tide of modernization (Prasetyo et al., 2017). Additionally, Sukalaksana Village has become a model of a village that has successfully overcome its underdevelopment through the optimal utilization of local potential. With a spirit of cooperation and innovation, the community has transformed the village's image from one of underdevelopment into a premier tourist destination in Garut.

B. Communication Strategies of the Sukalaksana Village Community in Developing Ecotourism

1. Communication through Socialization and Continuous Education

Socialization and education are the main strategies implemented to build community understanding and involvement in the development of tourism villages. These activities are carried out regularly through training, counseling, and group discussions involving all elements of society, including traditional leaders, youth, and women's groups. The Garut Regency Government, through the Tourism and Culture Office, regularly holds at least eight training sessions per year for tourism village managers across Garut, including Sukalaksana (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024).

Socialization is an important initial step in introducing the concept of sustainable ecotourism to the community. Through socialization, the community of Sukalaksana Village can understand their role in community-based tourism management, the importance of preserving the environment, and the economic and social benefits that can be obtained (Nofrion et al., 2025). Socialization activities should involve various elements of the community, such as village governments, youth, community leaders, and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). This fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, as well as positive responses toward the development of ecotourism. Responses also serve as feedback in the communication process. Feedback is the final step in the process, ensuring that the recipient has received the message and interpreted it correctly according to the sender's intent.

This enhances communication effectiveness by allowing the sender to assess how effectively their message was conveyed (Dixit, 2018)

In addition to socialization, continuous education is crucial for enhancing public awareness and knowledge, as well as that of tourists, about the importance of preserving nature and local culture. Education can be conducted through training, workshops, integrating environmental materials into school curricula, and environmental campaigns such as reducing plastic waste and using alternative energy (Permata et al., 2023). Engaging and informative educational content is disseminated through various digital platforms, such as social media, websites, and blogs, to ensure sustainability messages reach a broader audience. A good communication strategy also involves partnerships with the media and educational institutions, as well as collaboration with NGOs and universities to strengthen message delivery and expand the reach of education. Communication that is open, dialogical, and persuasive will build community trust and involvement in every stage of ecotourism development.

2. Communication with Stakeholders and the Community

The development of ecotourism in Sukalaksana Village involves collaboration with various parties, such as universities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. This collaboration is not only in the form of funding, but also knowledge transfer, assistance, and joint promotion. One concrete example is the tourism branding program carried out in collaboration with universities through a thematic community service program. In addition, effective communication is key to building synergy between the village government, community, business actors, non-governmental organizations, and corporate partners such as Chevron Geothermal Indonesia Ltd. and Bank BRI. Through a multi-stakeholder approach, the tourism development program in this village is not only oriented towards economic improvement but also cultural and environmental preservation (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024).

Community involvement in every stage of tourism development is crucial to ensure that economic and social benefits are distributed equitably. However, research indicates that initially, resource distribution and authority remain concentrated among certain groups, resulting in inadequate empowerment of communities, particularly the poor. To address this, new institutions such as committees, regulators, and field executors need to be established to ensure a more equitable distribution of authority and responsibility.

Additionally, open and participatory communication encourages the community to innovate, such as transforming traditional farmers into agrotourism practitioners. The community now relies not only on agricultural products but also packages farming activities as educational tourist attractions, such as cabbage planting tours and agricultural tourism packages (Setiati, 2023). This innovation is supported by training, mentoring, and marketing networks facilitated by external partners and local governments.

3. Communication through Participatory Approach and Local Wisdom

The communication strategy also emphasizes a participatory approach, where the community is involved in every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation of the tourism program. The values of local wisdom and culture are used as the basis for every communication message, so that the message is easily accepted and internalized by the community.

In addition, community participation in the development of ecotourism-based tourism villages must begin at the planning stage. Through socialization, focus group discussions (FGDs), and public consultations, the community can convey their aspirations, ideas, and hopes for the future of the tourist village. This early involvement fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility so that the community is more committed to maintaining and developing existing tourism potential (Puspaningrum et al., 2023).

The participatory approach also includes community economic empowerment. Skills training, institutional strengthening, and the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) based on local potential, such as handicrafts, traditional culinary, and

tour guide services, can increase residents' income and living standards (Zulaika & Trisakti, 2021). In the participatory approach, the people of Sukalaksana Village actively participate in the development of Sukalaksana Village. This is evidenced by the community directly participating in managing the Bina Laksana Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). The mechanism for formulating the BUMDes Bina Laksana work program in Sukalaksana Village is the holding of a Hamlet Deliberation (MUSDus), after which the BUMDes Bina Laksana management and the Village Government hold a Village Deliberation (MUSDes) by inviting all elements including youth leaders, community leaders, religious leaders, business leaders and business partners to formulate the BUMDes Bina Laksana work program (Master of Development Studies Program, 2024). In addition, the BUMDes captured quite a lot of aspirations from the community and prioritized the priorities proposed by the community. Then, local wisdom becomes an important foundation in the development of ecotourism in Sukalaksana Village. The values of tradition, culture, and local knowledge regarding nature management must be integrated in every tourism program. This not only enriches the tourist experience, but also strengthens the identity and attractiveness of the tourism village. The preservation of local customs, arts and culture is the main attraction that distinguishes Sukalaksana Village from other tourist destinations. The success of ecotourism development based on participation and local wisdom can be seen from the increase in community welfare, environmental preservation, and the preservation of local cultural values. With effective communication, collaboration between the village government, tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis), and all elements of the community, Sukalaksana Village has the opportunity to become an example of sustainable and highly competitive tourism village development in Indonesia (Prasetyo et al, 2017).

4. Conclusion

Sukalaksana Village in Garut Regency shows that local cultural preservation and ecotourism development can go hand in hand if driven by strong community engagement, local wisdom and strategic communication. Through participatory and inclusive approaches, the village has successfully transformed cultural assets into economic opportunities, empowering residents - especially women and youth - through creative economy initiatives such as Shibori batik and traditional culinary production.

The integration of cultural preservation with ecotourism based on the values of cooperation and social responsibility not only strengthens the village's identity, but also contributes to improved welfare, environmental awareness, and educational tourism. Communication strategies that emphasize socialization, education, collaboration with stakeholders, and the use of local wisdom have proven to be crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and sustainable development.

Sukalaksana Village is an example of how villagers can adapt to modernization without losing their cultural roots. Its success provides valuable lessons for other villages looking to preserve traditions while achieving economic resilience through ecotourism. Ultimately, Sukalaksana Village exemplifies that with effective communication and community-based innovation, local culture can thrive as a key pillar of sustainable rural development. In addition, this study demonstrates how participatory, local wisdom-based communication strategies can sustain culture while advancing rural ecotourism.

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