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Developing the Wair Baluk Well as a Spiritual Tourism Attraction Based on Storynomics in Watukrus Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province

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Abstract

Spiritual tourism has been recognized as an integral part of the global tourism industry because it offers profound spiritual experiences and meanings for tourists. This research aims to analyze the response of the local community, supporting and inhibiting factors to formulate a model for the development of storynomics based spiritual tourism. This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The results show that there is a positive response from the local community towards the development of storynomics based spiritual tourism. However, there are obstacles such as limited local human resources, lack of policies for development, funding for attraction development, and minimal partnerships with external parties. Therefore, modeling is needed to emphasize the importance of building a strong and authentic narrative that involves and motivates stakeholders to actively participate in the development of spiritual tourism. The implications of this research provide valuable insights for tourism practitioners, researchers, and policymakers to enhance the management of storynomics based spiritual tourism by strengthening stakeholder engagement in the development agenda. This model can serve as a foundation for developing sustainable policies and implementation strategies in an effort to achieve holistic and competitive spiritual tourism development.

Keywords:Spiritual tourism, *storynomics*, stakeholders participation

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INTRODUCTION

The paradigm of contemporary tourism has shifted towards quality in the management of a tourism destination by adopting a collective mindset among stakeholders. Muga and Sawu (2024) mentioned that sustainable tourism focuses on tourism practices that involve environmental sustainability, local community participation, environmental justice, conservation, and tourism destination development. This approach aims to comprehensively implement sustainability values at the tourism destination effectively. In response to this shift, special interest tourism has emerged as a bridge that actualizes the needs of each tourism destination. Within this understanding, spiritual tourism holds an important position in contemporary tourism phenomena. Its presence aims at the personal growth of tourists. The orientation of spiritual tourism is to provide a peaceful inner experience for tourists in their quest to understand their essence as human beings through travel activities. This aligns with contemporary travel trends where tourists seek sustainability, serenity, and spirituality (Arida and Sunarta, 2017).

Empirically, there are many tourism destinations that have adopted spiritual tourism products to enrich tourists' experiences. Spiritual experience-based products will leave a unique impression on tourists after their visit. The implications of such impressions can enhance the image of a destination and influence future tourist visits. McKercher (2002) states that spiritual tourism is a very important idea because it encompasses both tangible and intangible aspects that can affect visitors' goals. This is certainly expected in promoting the quality of the tourism being developed. In order to achieve this, support from stakeholders, especially the local community, is needed. The response of the local community will greatly determine the effectiveness of future spiritual tourism development, considering that the market share of spiritual tourism is a niche market with highly prospective sustainability. Therefore, serious attention is required in the development of spiritual tourism.

Watukrus Village in Bola District, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, has a variety of interesting tourism potentials, both natural and cultural. These tourism potentials have not yet received attention from stakeholders as tourist attractions. This is very important to investigate so that it can be developed to provide added value for the local community. Geographically, this area is very strategic in the planning of tourism development in Bola District. The reality of tourism development has evolved in this area with the emergence of several tourism activities in the coastal areas, albeit on a small scale and carried out by individuals. This phenomenon provides a positive outlook to encourage the development of other potential tourism assets in this area. An inventory of

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tourism potentials must be carried out to map the strengths of tourism resources that can be developed optimally and sustainably.

Wair Baluk Well is an untouched spiritual tourism potential. This attraction is widely known by the local community in the village. However, it has not yet become a tourist attraction capable of drawing visitors' interest. The relevant stakeholders have not actively participated in promoting its development. Historically, Wair Baluk Well is a historical relic from the Dominican Order missionaries in the 1500s and has a very strong spiritual attraction. Wair Baluk Well has not been fully explored, developed, or optimally managed by the relevant stakeholders as a tourism product with high-quality market value. It is important to focus on its development so that it can benefit the local community by improving their quality of life.

The historical value of Sumur Wair Baluk is highly potential to be packaged into a storynomic narrative for the development of spiritual tourism. This packaging is intended as the essence of tourist attraction presented to visitors. The goal is to create an emotional bond with tourists, a bond with the visited tourist attraction, and a bond with the cultural traditions of the local community at the tourist attraction. This packaging is expected to provide enriching experiences for visiting tourists. The hope is for tourists to have an intention to revisit. Sawu and Ridla (2024) stated that tourists play a crucial role in the development of tourism and should be engaged as co-creators. The involvement of tourists as co-creators is a vital strategy in the development of tourism destinations to meet personalized demands and gain competitive advantages.Therefore, repeated and patterned visits can enhance social implications for the communities around the spiritual tourist attraction. According to McKee and Gerace (2018), the term "storynomic" refers to the use of storytelling to gain financial benefits.

The issue in this research is the suboptimalization of spiritual tourism potential. The causes are minimal human resources and the absence of tourism development policies at the village level. This has become a hindering factor in the development of spiritual tourism in Sumur Wair Baluk. The involvement of stakeholders is crucial for enhancing the appeal of spiritual tourism. In this context, comprehensive ideas, narratives, and development of spiritual tourism are needed. Through this approach, it is hoped that the development of spiritual tourism will have social implications for both the local community and visiting tourists. Therefore, the researcher formulates the research question as follows.

1. How has the community responded to the development of spiritual tourism in Watukrus Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?

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2. How do supportive and inhibiting factors affect the development of spiritual tourism in Watukrus Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?
3. How do stakeholders participate in the development of spiritual tourism model in Watukrus Village, Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?

This research is considered highly important as it promotes spiritual tourism as a new product in rural areas, which not only aims to generate economic benefits but also revives local values and provides personal benefits for visiting tourists. The great potential of spiritual tourism necessitates development to realise these benefits. In this context, a stakeholder participation model needs to be formulated so that the development plan for the potential of spiritual tourism can be well executed. Consequently, spiritual tourism can introduce a new quality dimension in the development of rural tourism.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative method and phenomenological approach to examine the development of storynomics based spiritual tourism. Local communities and village authorities were interviewed for the purposes of this study. The aim of this research is to design a stakeholder participation model in spiritual tourism development by analysing local community responses, supporting factors, and hindering factors. As part of the literature analysis on spiritual tourism, previously identified elements were discussed in the interviews conducted in this study. Additionally, questions regarding local community responses, as well as supporting and hindering factors, were also addressed in the interviews of this research.

The research was conducted through in-depth interviews with local community members and other stakeholders. Informant selection was based on the following considerations: local community members knowledgeable about the history of Sumur Wairbaluk and interested in developing it into a tourist attraction, as well as other supporting stakeholders. The researcher conducted interviews with a total of 16 informants.

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Table 1. Research Participants

Type of Informant	The Number of Informants	Stakeholder types	Internal (I) Eksternal (E)
Local Communities	10	Business operators and the general local community	I
Village government	1	Head of Village Government	I
Academia	5	Cristo Re Polytechnic	E

Phenomenological analysis is a research method focused on understanding the lived experiences of subjects or participants. In research on spiritual tourism, phenomenological analysis can be employed to explore the meanings and experiences of local stakeholders or individuals connected with local tourism elements. This study will analyse local community responses, supportive factors, and barriers to formulating a model for developing storynomics based spiritual tourism.

DISCUSSION

Local Community Responses in Spiritual Tourism Development

The response of the local community is crucial as it determines the direction of spiritual tourism development. The presence of the local community is the primary source of strength to drive spiritual tourism development. Active participation of the local community is highly necessary to ensure that spiritual tourism development can deliver comprehensive benefits at tourist destinations. The aspirations of the local community regarding tourism destination development should serve as a catalyst for change and thus require addressing through village development policies. In theory, various types of rural tourism development should revolve around the local community, aiming for them to be both the subject and object of tourism development. The hope is that the resulting tourism implications can be controlled and provide comprehensive benefits to the local community.

The development of spiritual tourism requires authentic engagement from the local community. The spirit of the local community will determine the orientation of sustainable development. Practically, local community engagement faces numerous implementation

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hurdles, including human resources, financial capital, social capital, and others. Local capacity development is necessary so that they can compete in managing their tourism resources effectively. Efforts to achieve this require stakeholder involvement to drive such development. Empowering the community is key to advancing tourism development at the rural destination level.

The attraction of Wair Baluk Well has significant potential for the development of spiritual tourism. A targeted development scheme is crucial to achieve high-quality outcomes. Currently, there is no factual basis for development planning aimed at establishing Sumur Wair Baluk as a spiritual tourism destination. However, the local community desires to develop it into a spiritual tourism attraction. This desire is grounded in the historical and spiritual values associated with the existence of Sumur Wair Baluk. Certainly, effective and efficient development will provide comprehensive benefits for the growth of a tourism destination. One of these benefits is economic, which could enhance the quality of life for the local community. Below is an excerpt of an interview that the researcher can include.

> *"We wish for Wair Baluk Well to be preserved in the future through tourism development. This well needs to be properly arranged as it holds historical and spiritual value. Additionally, there are local community heritage remains (Watu Mahe) near this well. However, so far, there have been no preservation efforts at all. We aim to conserve it to become an attraction that depicts some aspects of the local community's life here (local community, 2024)."*

Sociologically, the presence of Sumur Wair Baluk holds a historically rich value. There is a coexistence of social-cultural values alongside spiritual values. This dimension can enhance the destination-based art tourism values that can enrich the experience for visiting tourists. This experiential product is at the core of tourism development. The positive perceptions felt by tourists will impact the advancement of the destination in the future. The existence of these intangible values can enhance the competitiveness of rural destinations. The interaction process between tourists and the local community will create social implications that bring about changes for the tourism destination. Therefore, policies for spiritual tourism development are crucial to drive social changes for the local community. This is essential to ensure the well-being of the local population.

The enthusiasm of the community must be met with targeted development policies. Site planning and the framework of storynomics must be carefully formulated. The aim is to implement spiritual tourism development that can portray a positive image of rural tourism destinations. The development of spiritual tourism product components should

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be community-based, utilizing local tourism resources. This development approach is intended to produce high-quality tourism prototypes in the future. Community participation in tourism planning has become crucial (Lamberti et al., 2011). Community participation will result in responsible tourism behavior. Undoubtedly, sustainable growth of the tourism industry can only be achieved with strong community support. However, if the aspirations of residents are not included in tourism planning, conflicts detrimental to industry development may arise (Zhang et al., 2006).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Development of Spiritual Tourism

The massive potential for spiritual tourism is a unique strength that can be developed into a tourist attraction. This potential is supported by the local community as the main component in driving spiritual tourism in rural destinations. The strength of these elements has great potential to develop a competitive tourist attraction in the future. The historical, spiritual, and socio-cultural values of the local community can offer a distinct dimension of spirituality. Therefore, a development scheme for spiritual tourism centred on the local community is necessary, considering that the local community will benefit and directly receive its effects. The management of tourist destinations must be understood and managed sustainably within a broader context (Sawu et al, 2024) to provide dual positive impacts for the local community in the future (Sawu and Sugiarti, 2020; Sawu et al, 2024). The following is an excerpt from an interview that the researcher can attach.

> *"We are very enthusiastic about developing Wair Baluk Well as a tourist attraction. However, we face many challenges in terms of institutional aspects, human resources, and others. We need support from relevant stakeholders to develop it (local community, 2024)."*

There are many challenges that will be faced in the future development of spiritual tourism. These challenges include the minimal number of tourism human resources, the absence of regulations, the financing of tourist attraction development, and partnerships with external stakeholders. These challenges are latent issues in the growth of a new tourist attraction. This needs to be addressed carefully as it will cause the new tourist attraction to be slow to develop. Developing a new tourist attraction must be done in parallel with the development of tourism human resources. This level of complexity must be managed as an art of tourism management to provide effective and efficient benefits. The following are excerpts from interviews that the author can attach.

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"The issue of human resources is a very fundamental one. Practically, it is very difficult to ensure tourism development that is pro-community without developing human resources that are ready to navigate the flow of tourism. However, it is not easy to convince the community without developing tourism destination components. Therefore, these two aspects must be carried out in a harmonious manner. Once that is realised, the next major task lies with marketing management (academic, 2024)".

Tourism development policies are a crucial choice in addressing the aspirations of the community. Attention to the tourism sector at the village level is key to future development. The government, as a regulator and facilitator, must be able to identify the potential of local resources for future development. Tourism can serve as a sector that enhances the welfare of rural communities. This will occur if tourism development has well-targeted regulations. Villages need to establish "Village-Owned Enterprises" to accommodate the needs of potential sector development. The tourism sector must be given serious attention as a form of product diversification expected to achieve sustainable development goals.

Stakeholder Participation Model in the Development of Storynomics-Based Spiritual Tourism

Stakeholder participation is necessary to address the desires of the local community and the obstacles that will be encountered. The development of spiritual tourism requires stakeholder participation to be inclusive and sustainable. The presence of stakeholders will be able to create solutions in the development of spiritual tourism. This approach must be built into the development planning stage so that there is a clear roadmap for future implementation. Storynomics based spiritual tourism must be well-packaged to be presented to tourists. The historical value of spirituality and socio-cultural aspects should serve as magnets to attract tourist interest. In order to achieve this, a model for the development of storynomics based spiritual tourism is needed as a direction for development.

According to McKee and Gerace (2018), storynomic tourism is a style of tourism that prioritises narrative, innovative content, lifestyle, and the cultural strength of destinations. By employing the storynomic tourism approach, cultural elements in tourist destinations can foster emotional attachment, place attachment, and social bonds with the cultural traditions of the destination (Sendra, 2023). Thus, the storynomic approach can help create mutual bonds between tourists and their destination. Storynomic tourism,

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popularized by Minister of Tourism Arief Yahya, aims to raise awareness through storytelling to showcase the beauty and richness of Indonesian cultural charm. Research (Kartika and Riana, 2020) found that myths, legends, and stories of tourist destinations can influence tourist interest.

Spiritual tourism is attracting growing academic interest and is often considered an extension of religious tourism (Kujawa, 2017). Spiritual tourism, exploring religious sites, is independent of religion, beliefs, regions, or countries (Rawal and Sah, 2017). In spiritual tourism, tourists' orientation leans more towards personal growth rather than devotional aspects. Spiritual tourism is a quest to find answers to all the problems in one's life (Norman, 2011). Wilson et al. (2013) state through a "phenomenological portrait" of people engaging in spiritual tourism, there is evidence that these tourists feel "energised", "inspired", and "elevated" after their journey and also experience a sense of "connection" with people from other parts of the world, indicating clear signs of the spiritual aspects of their travels.

The presence of stakeholders is intended to support the local community in shaping a spiritually-based tourism product based on storynomics. Government policy formulation is required for the development of spiritual tourism as the basis for village-level tourism development. Collaboration with the industry is necessary to enhance community skills in tourist services. Furthermore, assisting in product packaging to access niche markets. The orientation of spiritually-based storynomics tourism products aims to transform tourists' mindsets towards quality tourism experiences. Through this approach, a new prototype of rural tourism can be formed for sustainable tourism in the future. Tourism has a unique opportunity to shape the sector not just to grow, but to grow better, prioritizing inclusivity, sustainability, and responsibility. Additionally, to build for the future, special attention must be given to building resilience and promoting sustainability at all levels (UNWTO, 2020b).

Murphy (1985) argues that involving local communities in community planning decision-making can prevent conflicts between local communities and central authorities, as seen in South America (Kent, 2006). However, the main barriers to collaborative planning are a lack of shared vision or the inability for all stakeholders to participate (Ladkin and Bertramini, 2002). Nevertheless, in many studies, the absence of stakeholder participation has been cited as a major issue in collaborative planning approaches (Sautter and Leisen, 1999). For example, Blackstock (2005) states that "the local community is a homogeneous body capable of decision-making through consensus, whereas community-based tourism approaches lack a shared vision. The stakeholder

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approach acknowledges that stakeholders must participate in tourism planning (Hall, 2008). This approach emphasizes the plurality of organizational interest groups and the political nature of setting organizational goals and policy implementation (Treuren and Lane, 2003). Muga and Sawu (2024) stated that tourism management requires the involvement of stakeholders and the structuring of the components of the tourism sector so that they are integrated to provide effective and efficient results.

CONCLUSION

The local community has responded positively to the development of spiritual tourism. There is a strong desire to develop it as a spiritual tourism attraction, based on the historical and socio-cultural values of the local Sumur Wair Baluk. Spiritual tourism based on storynomics is seen as an appealing combination in its development. However, this desire is confronted with challenges such as tourism human resources, lack of development policies, financing for tourism attraction development, and minimal stakeholder participation. Therefore, a model for developing spiritual tourism based on storynomics is needed to map out its future development path. The existence of such a model is expected to serve as a framework for thinking about the development of spiritual tourism based on storynomics in rural destinations to enhance the well-being of the local community.

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