

Strategies for Developing Thematic Tourism Villages Based on Agrarian Culture and Local Wisdom (Case Study of Pule Village, Madiun Regency)

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ABSTRACT

The development of thematic tourism villages based on agrarian culture and local wisdom holds strategic potential for strengthening destination identity and boosting the local economy. However, the sustainability of such programs is often hindered by reliance on specific events, as well as insufficient product innovation and governance.

This study examines strategies for developing thematic tourism villages based on agrarian culture and local wisdom in Pule Village, Sawahan Subdistrict, Madiun Regency.

A qualitative descriptive approach was used, involving in-depth interviews and observations. Informants included the village head, the tourism awareness group, and community groups.

The findings indicate that: 1) The Rendengan Cultural Festival serves as the primary driver of tourism activities in the village; 2) Numerous constraints have led to a decline in tourism activities; 3) A thematic tourism village development strategy is needed to ensure tourism activities remain vibrant and sustainable.

The strategies formulated include establishing a thematic tourism village based on the agricultural calendar, developing cultural and local tradition-based educational tourism, and strengthening an experiential tourism approach that directly involves tourists in village life. This study contributes practical insights toward the development of a thematic tourism village rooted in agrarian culture and local wisdom.

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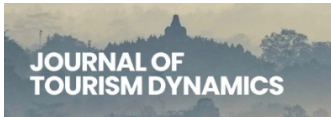
INTRODUCTION

Tourism villages and their development process have emerged as a strategic choice in sustainable tourism development and efforts to preserve cultural heritage, particularly in developing countries rich in natural resources, culture, and strong agrarian traditions. Rural tourism is a key means of transforming ecological advantages into economic benefits (Li et al., 2025:1). Beyond serving as an alternative destination, tourism villages function as instruments for empowering local communities through the participatory utilization of the village's endogenous potential (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015:1133). In this context, community-based tourism prioritizes a balance between environmental conservation, economic growth, and the socio-cultural sustainability of local communities (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018:759).

As competition among destinations intensifies, strategies for developing tourism villages have become an unavoidable necessity. One unique and applicable approach is the development of thematic tourism villages—a destination differentiation strategy that highlights specific themes rooted in local identity to create distinctive and meaningful tourism experiences (Richards, 2018:12). The thematic approach is considered capable of strengthening a destination's image, enhancing tourism appeal, and extending tourists' length of stay through experiences rooted in local stories, activities, and values (Binkhorst & den Dekker, 2009:311). Several regions have implemented Thematic Village Programs in an effort to address village issues, such as in the cities of Semarang, Malang, and Bogor, and in Bandung Regency (Akbar & Alfian, 2018:37; Kristiana & Kusumoarto, 2019:1146; Marsdenia & Pranita, 2019:51; Sutanudjaja et al., 2018:24; Tamara & Rahdriawan, 2018:40). Thematic villages in Poland are associated with a single community activity conducted on a larger scale, where the theme becomes the village's specialization. Poland has been developing thematic villages from 2010 to 2012 as part of its rural development strategy (Głuszak, 2012:10). In a context of increasing choice and competition among destinations, it has become crucial for destinations to devise innovative strategies to create product and experience differentiation that delivers value and leaves a lasting impression on tourists (Neuhofer & Landkin, 2012:36).

In rural communities, agrarian values and local wisdom form the primary foundation of social, economic, and cultural life. Traditional agricultural systems, patterns of human-nature relationships, and local practices passed down across generations embody sustainability values relevant to the principles of sustainable tourism (Judijanto, 2025:45). Nevertheless, many tourism villages still face challenges in managing their agrarian potential and local wisdom innovatively. Tourism development is often fragmented, focused solely on physical attractions, and fails to effectively package local values as the main theme integrated into the tourism experience (UNWTO, 2018:65). This situation risks homogenizing destinations and undermining the uniqueness of tourism villages amid the tide of mass tourism (Yanan et al., 2024:1).

Based on these conditions and previous research identifying supporting and inhibiting factors for thematic villages (Putri, 2025:52), research on the transformation of urban village spaces into thematic village tourism destinations (Sukowati, 2022:27), and



research on a thematic village development model in Mulyaharja Village, Bogor (Parantika et al., 2020:1), it is important to conduct a study on the potential and strategies for unique rural tourism that differs from other regions. Meanwhile, studies on implementation-oriented strategies for developing thematic villages, particularly in Pule Village, remain limited and need to be conducted.

This study provides a qualitative overview of the origins of Pule Village as a tourism village, along with the Rendengan Cultural Festival. The current existence of Pule Village relies solely on festival activities; therefore, it is necessary to analyze the factors hindering tourism activities outside the festival’s implementation. Furthermore, attention is needed regarding the development of thematic tourism villages based on agrarian values and local wisdom as a strategy to strengthen the destination’s competitiveness while maintaining the social, cultural, and economic sustainability of the village community. This approach is expected to bridge the gap between the tourism market’s growing demand for authentic experiences and efforts to preserve local values, which serve as the identity and primary strength of the tourism village.

METHODS

The scope of this study is located in Pule Village, Sawahan Subdistrict, Madiun Regency. The research employs a descriptive research design using a qualitative approach conducted from January 12, 2026 to January 30, 2026. This approach focuses on collecting natural and descriptive data. According to Lambert & Lambert (2012), descriptive qualitative research is used when researchers wish to gain a contextual understanding of a social phenomenon as it is, with participants serving as the primary source of information.

Table 1. Research Instruments and Indicators

Data Collection Techniques	Instruments	Key Indicators
Interview	Interview Guidelines	History of the Tourism Village, Role of Festivals, Tourism Activities, Obstacles, Development Strategies
Observation	Observation Sheet	Condition of tourism facilities and tourist activities
Documentation	Documentation and Archives	Visitor data, festival activities, supporting archives

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with a number of key informants representing various stakeholders in Pule Village. The selection of informants in this study employed *purposive sampling*, which involves intentionally selecting informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Informants were selected because they possess knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the management and tourism activities in Pule Village. Additionally, *snowball sampling* was used to identify additional

informants based on recommendations from previous informants. Some of the informants selected through these two methods include the Village Head, who serves as both a key informant and the initiator of the tourism village concept, as well as the Secretary of the Pule Village Tourism Development Group (Pokdarwis), members of the MSME merchant community, Andong Wisata cart drivers, parking attendants, the manager of the Flamboyan Library, the manager of the Tirta Ceria Swimming Pool, the caretaker of the BUMDes minimarket, community members serving as the head of the village gamelan team, and several tourists visiting—both from cycling communities and individual visitors—at the Pule “Park”.

In addition to primary data, secondary data also comes from various relevant reference sources such as research journals, articles, theses, legislation, and other literature study data related to the research topic. Data analysis in this study uses the Miles and Huberman analysis technique as described in Sugiyono (2013), which includes: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Thus, this method contributes to the development of theory and empirical understanding of social reality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Origins of the Formation of Ceria Pule Tourism Village and the Existence of the Rendengan Festival

Pule Village is one of the villages administratively located in Sawahan Subdistrict, Madiun Regency, East Java Province. This village is part of the administrative area of Madiun Regency, most of which is characterized by an agrarian rural landscape and is situated in the foothills of the Wilis Mountains. Generally, the land in Pule Village is used productively, with the majority consisting of rice fields covering an area of 76.8 hectares. This indicates that the land in Pule Village is available and ready for cultivation. The majority of Pule Village residents work as farmers. Pule Village is an agricultural area that relies on irrigation via a groundwater pumping system and rainwater. This is because, in recent years, water flow from underground sources has become insufficient due to the construction of a toll road that crosses the village.



Figure 1. Rice Fields of Pule Village

Figure 2. Pule Park

Since taking office as Village Head in 2008, Anton Setyoko has observed that Pule Village is often labeled as a backward rural area with limited access due to its relatively remote location from urban centers. A turning point occurred in 2015 with the allocation of Village Funds, which were subsequently utilized to reclaim the village-owned rice and repurpose them into a public space—a recreational area equipped with a *jogging track*. The area was subsequently developed into Taman Pule, featuring various facilities supporting the community's social and economic activities, such as activity centers, a children's playground, public open spaces, a library, a café, a *food court*, and a pavilion serving as a hub for communal activities.

The development of the area continued with the construction of the Tirta Ceria Swimming Pool, utilizing remaining funds and the village head's technical expertise in construction. The presence of this facility received a positive response from the community and attracted tourists from surrounding villages, thereby increasing Pule Village's exposure as a local recreational destination. As visitor numbers increased, Pule Village began to be positioned and promoted as "Kampung Wisata Ceria" (Cheerful Tourism Village). The village concept was deemed relevant to Pule Village's circumstances, as it had previously been categorized as a village with a low standard of living.

This rapid development caught the attention of the local government, leading to Pule Village's inclusion in Madiun Regency's tourism event calendar in 2019. This designation spurred the organization of the Rendengan Cultural Festival, rooted in the labuhan ritual tradition—an agrarian cultural practice passed down through generations and serving as an annual event for Pule Village residents at the start of the rainy season. The labuhan ritual represents the farmers' expression of gratitude for the gift of rain, as well as a collective prayer that the rainy season will bring blessings and spare them from natural disasters that could potentially cause crop failure.

The name "Rendengan Cultural Festival" is inspired by the local term "rendengan," which etymologically derives from the word "rendeng" (rainy season) with the suffix "-an," which in Javanese cultural context refers to collective activities related to seasonal cycles. Thus, "Rendengan" is understood as a shared cultural practice undertaken by the community to welcome the rainy season. The festival was first held in late 2019 and was included in the official event calendar of Madiun Regency. Although it received high enthusiasm from the community, the initial festival was still limited in scope due to insufficient preparation, so the event lasted only one day and featured local traditional arts.

Plans to develop the festival on a more comprehensive scale were delayed due to the implementation of social restrictions during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, tourism activities in Pule Village did not come to a complete halt, as Pule Park continued to function as a recreational facility for residents. In the same year, Pule Village received an award as a Village for Cultural Advancement. By early 2021, the Covid-19 outbreak was gradually brought under control, reopening the possibility of holding the Rendengan

Festival . Mr. Anton then collaborated with artists from Yogyakarta, including Om Black and Om Dobleh, in organizing the event. Through Anton Setyoko's vision, the festival was successfully developed into a traditional dance performance designed as the distinctive identity of the Rendengan Festival. By involving local dance and gamelan artists, the Rendengan Dance was ultimately created as a representation of the local culture.

After the choreography and musical composition of the Rendengan Dance were finalized, the next phase focused on designing performance costumes and training dancers, particularly the village's youth. To ensure artistic quality, the training process was guided by professional instructors from one of Madiun's leading dance studios, Studio Java U2. The regular weekly practice sessions eventually gave rise to a village dance training center known as the Bintang Pule Dance Studio. Conceptually, the Rendengan Dance is rich in symbolic values that represent the worldview of the agrarian community of Pule Village. The use of a water jug placed on the dancer's head symbolizes respect for water as the primary source of life and the sustainability of agriculture. Meanwhile, the white costumes worn by the dancers reflect the values of purity and sincerity as the spiritual foundation of the local community's cultural practices. With the creation of the Rendengan Dance, the main entertainment icon of a festival is now complete, offering potential as a cultural tourism attraction to draw many visitors



Figure 3. Rendengan Dance

After undergoing more systematic preparation throughout 2020, the Rendengan Cultural Festival was held again at the end of 2021 with more significant achievements compared to its previous iteration in 2019. In 2021, the festival lasted four days and three nights, running from Thursday through Sunday. The series of activities began on Thursday evening after Maghrib with the opening ritual procession of the “-labuhan” tradition—the collection of water from five springs scattered across the five cardinal directions of Pule Village. The water was placed in jars and carried in a procession to the Baitul Mutaqin Mosque. During the procession, the community observes the “topo bisu” tradition—walking in silence without speaking. In this ritual water-collection practice, the people of Pule Village believe that the water is not “taken,” but rather “requested” from sacred springs as a form of respect for the guardians of nature and the sources of life. The series of events then continued with a session on the History of Pule Village presented by

the Village Head. One theory suggests that the name Pule originates from the presence of the Pule Tree, which once grew abundantly in the village area but is no longer found there today.

The second day of the Rendengan Festival began with a Quran recitation ceremony at the Baitul Mutaqin Mosque. Water stored in a clay jar is then blessed on Friday to be used in the ritual's climactic procession on Sunday. In the afternoon, the community participates in various traditional agricultural-themed competitions, such as a clay jar race, a duck-catching contest, a geretan race, and a water fight. The series of activities on Saturday featured entertainment with local artists and performers, as well as cultural performances from nearby village art groups, such as Reog Ponorogo, jaranan, and comedic mask dance. In the evening, the event concluded with a workshop on event decoration facilitated by the Event Organizer as part of an effort to enhance the capacity of the village community.



Figure 4. The Kendi Feast Ritual

The fourth day marked the climax of the Rendengan Cultural Festival. The main activities took place from 7:00 AM to 9:30 AM, beginning with a procession of water jugs that had been blessed at the mosque on Friday, heading to the designated gathering point. During this procession, the community members () wore black attire and carried the kendi. The kendi were then arranged in the center of the ritual site, while the community gathered around them to perform a communal prayer known in local tradition as the Kenduri Kendi, as an expression of gratitude and a plea for safety in welcoming the arrival of the rainy season. Additionally, the residents of Pule Village bring various types of food from home, including main dishes and snacks, which are then blessed and shared among the villagers as a symbol of solidarity and social unity.

The Kenduri Kendi ritual, as the climax of the Rendengan Festival, concludes with a performance of the Rendengan Dance by female dancers from Pule Village who have undergone continuous training at the village dance studio. Informants interpret the overcast weather without rain as a special phenomenon that creates a solemn and comfortable atmosphere for the community participating in the procession. Afterward, the blessed water from the kendi is distributed to the villagers to be mixed into their household water as a symbol of blessings and hopes for goodness in daily life.



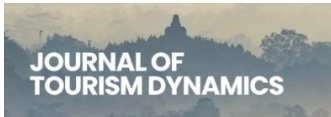
The series of rituals then continued with traditional art performances such as the Dongkrek and the children's Jaranan dance, which served as the grand finale of the four-day festival. Beyond serving as a space for cultural expression, the Rendengan Festival also functions as a vehicle for local economic empowerment through the involvement of SMEs, food vendors, and community members managing simple entertainment attractions like the odong-odong rickshaws. The success of the Rendengan Festival reflects the social transformation of Pule Village from a village previously perceived as underdeveloped into one capable of hosting large-scale cultural events. This was further reinforced by the presence of East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who witnessed the series of events firsthand. For the village government, the festival is not merely viewed as a tourism activity but also as a means to strengthen the value of mutual cooperation and efforts to preserve the labuhan ritual as a local cultural identity.

Since then, the Rendengan Festival has been established as an annual event typically held at the start of the rainy season. However, tourism activity remains seasonal, as visitor numbers tend to rise only during the festival and on weekends. This situation highlights the need to develop thematic tourism packages centered on education and experiential learning to ensure more sustainable visits, strengthen tourist-community interactions, and boost economic benefits for residents without relying solely on the agricultural sector. A thematic tourism approach emphasizing learning and hands-on experiences is believed to strengthen interactions between tourists and the local community and create a distinct destination experience, thereby potentially significantly increasing visitor numbers and community economic income, as well as reducing financial dependence on agricultural land (Chen et al., 2025:1).

Factors contributing to the decline in tourism activity outside of the festival

According to statements from the Village Head, MSME operators, and parking attendants in the Taman Pule area, the number of tourist visits saw a significant increase during the festival. However, post-event observations indicate that this surge in visits was not sustainable, as the number of tourists dropped drastically once the festival ended. Large groups of tourists typically arrive from other villages via tourist trains, which have become a popular mode of collective transportation due to their ease of access and relatively affordable costs. These tourist trains position Pule Village as both a primary destination and a stopover point before or after visiting other destinations in the Madiun and Ngawi regions. On Sundays, more than five tourist train sets are recorded visiting Pule Village, with a carrying capacity of approximately 30 adults per set. Tourist activities are generally limited to light recreational activities at Pule Park, while others utilize the facilities at Tirta Ceria Swimming Pool. Visitor numbers tend to increase on weekends and during school holidays.

In addition to general tourists, Pule Village also receives visits from a cycling community known as "Sepur" (Retired Veterans' Bicycle Group). This community visits Pule Village two to three times a month. Its members come from several villages in Magetan Regency and are predominantly elderly individuals with backgrounds as retirees, including former members of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and



the Indonesian National Police (Polri), medical personnel, law enforcement officers, educators, and other professions who have entered retirement. The community has approximately 35 members, who regularly go cycling every Wednesday and Sunday. Their visits to Pule Village are generally brief stops to rest and enjoy the local cuisine available at the food court.

In-depth interviews also revealed that efforts had previously been made to develop experience-based tourism activities, such as the creation of bamboo obstacle courses utilizing river currents, as well as the distribution of thematic tourist attractions across each neighborhood unit. For example, one area has developed a medicinal plant garden, while another area showcases the processing of rice-based food products made from locally grown crops. However, these various initiatives have not been sustained and tend to stall, thus failing to yield significant long-term impacts on tourism growth.

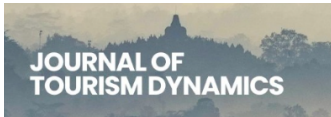
In the early stages of tourism area development, Pule Village also provided supporting facilities in the form of Cafe De Pule as a recreational space for visitors to rest, enjoy drinks, or relax after physical activities such as jogging and swimming. During the festival, the café experienced high visitor numbers and at one point employed up to 24 people. The initiative to establish this café was driven by the hope that local residents would have an alternative recreational space without having to travel to the center of Madiun City.

However, over time, the café's operations could not be sustained and it eventually ceased operations. The decline in visitor numbers was influenced by increasing competition from themed cafés in Madiun City, which offered more attractive interior design concepts and a wider variety of menu options. On the other hand, organizing a festival typically involves around 30 committee members drawn from the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) and village youth who participate voluntarily. This committee is responsible for various technical aspects, such as setting up decorations, managing equipment, and ensuring event security.

All funding for the event comes from the Village Fund, covering equipment rental costs, honoraria for art groups from outside the region, and event organizer services. The high budgetary requirements and the significant amount of effort required to organize the festival are key considerations for the village government in evaluating the sustainability of the activity, particularly regarding the decision of whether the cultural festival should be held annually. Based on field observations and an understanding of tourism dynamics in Pule Village, several key factors contributing to the decline in tourism activity can be identified, as follows.

Reliance on Event Organization

Tourism activities in Pule Village still show a fairly high dependence on the organization of specific events, particularly the Rendengan Festival and weekend visits. Outside of these peak periods, regularly scheduled tourist attractions remain limited, both in terms of variety and schedule reliability. This results in tourist visitation patterns that tend to be fluctuating and unsustainable, as surges occur during events, while on regular days tourism activity drops significantly. Consequently, the local economic turnover from



the tourism sector in Pule Village remains unstable due to the seasonal nature of revenue. Reliance on events also poses management challenges, as festivals require substantial operational costs and a large workforce, while their economic benefits remain limited and are absorbed by operational expenses. Under this pattern, festivals have not yet functioned as a sustainable source of income but remain temporary in nature.

This situation indicates that Pule Village lacks a “backbone” for tourism when there are no major events. When daily attractions are unstructured, tourists have limited activity options. As a result, *the length of stay* tends to be short, opportunities for tourist spending are low, and a consistent tourism experience has yet to be established. Ultimately, this situation risks hindering the establishment of Pule Village’s image as a “vibrant” year-round destination, as the village is currently perceived more as an event-based destination rather than one offering regularly accessible experiential packages. Therefore, a strategy is needed that is not only event-oriented but also builds routine activities based on experiences and education, such as agricultural calendar-themed packages, cultural workshops, live-in programs, and village cycling tours, to ensure more stable visitor numbers and a more sustainable economic impact for the community.

Limitations in Tourism Product Diversification

Tourism development in Pule Village still shows limitations in the diversification of tourism products. Tourism activities tend to be concentrated on Pule Park and the Rendengan Cultural Festival without more varied, thematic, and scheduled product offerings. Consequently, tourism experience options are relatively limited and heavily dependent on these two main attractions, indicating that the village’s potential has not yet been fully translated into clear “tourism products” such as daily packages, educational packages, cultural packages, or year-round *live-in* packages. In fact, Pule Village possesses resources that can be developed into diverse tourism products, such as its agricultural landscape, the Rendengan tradition, community cooperation, arts and cultural skills, and rural social life; however, these have not yet been widely packaged as agricultural-based educational tourism packages, *experiential tourism*, thematic *homestays*, or participatory creative tourism. When tourists merely “observe” without “experiencing,” the quality of the experience becomes less profound, and the absence of structured packages also hinders promotion because the village lacks products that are easily understood by the market.

Conceptually, tourism development requires transforming potential into products that are ready to be offered, unique, and tailored to the needs of specific market segments. In Pule Village, product diversification is essential to reach segments such as students (educational tourism), cultural communities (arts tourism), families (rural recreation), and specialty interest tourists (agricultural and landscape tourism). Limited product innovation results in low long-term appeal, potential tourist saturation, low repeat visits, short stay durations, and suboptimal economic circulation. Therefore, the village needs to focus on product innovation through thematic tour packages, scheduling of routine activities, and participatory tourism models that involve tourists in agricultural, cultural, and social village life to make Pule Village’s appeal stronger and more sustainable.



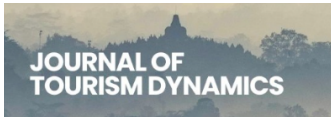
Weak Promotion and Utilization of Digital Media

Promotional efforts and the utilization of digital media for Kampung Wisata Ceria Desa Pule have not been managed optimally. Although the village has an Instagram and YouTube account, the frequency of posts, consistency of scheduling, and variety of content remain low because content management is ad hoc and centered on event-based moments. Consequently, destination communication is not sustained, digital exposure is unstable, and audience brand recall is difficult to establish in the long term. Ideally, digital media should function as an active, narrative, and continuous destination communication tool, covering information on attractions, access, schedules, tour packages, image building, and consistent interaction with potential tourists. When content appears only sporadically, the audience does not get a complete picture of the travel experience outside of events, thereby weakening their interest in visiting. In other words, the weakness of digital promotion makes Pule Village less “present” in the minds of tourists on ordinary days.

In strengthening promotion, influencers have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of digital tourism media (Cornellia et al., 2024: 1154). However, collaborations must consider the alignment of the influencer’s persona with the destination, the quality of interaction with followers, content creativity, and sustained visual and storytelling-based communication. If designed well, influencers can expand the audience reach and increase tourists’ trust in the destination. A *storytelling* approach is also relevant to Pule Village’s character as an agrarian-cultural village. Narratives about farmers’ daily lives, the planting-harvesting cycle, the Rendengan tradition, rice field landscapes, and cooperative practices can foster emotional connection with the audience and boost engagement and more stable visitation interest. To achieve this, a structured content calendar is needed that combines informative content (packages, routes, facilities), experiential content (educational tours, *live-in stays*, *workshops*), narrative content (stories of traditions and farmers), and interactive content (polls, Q&A, live streams). With this approach, digital promotion for “ ” is no longer *event-driven* but becomes a sustainable destination communication strategy that strengthens Pule Village’s competitiveness as a thematic tourism village.

Limitations in Tourism Management Capacity and Institutional Structure

Institutional capacity and human resources in the management of tourism in Pule Village still face various limitations. The Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) has not yet played an optimal role in initiating and managing sustainable destination development. Additionally, there are no specialized training programs focused on enhancing tourism management capacity, attraction packaging, tourism services, and the development of management successors. Management succession has also not been optimized, as evidenced by the continued dominance of the village head as the primary driving force. This situation makes the sustainability of tourism management highly dependent on specific individuals.



Changes in Tourists' Interests and Preferences

According to Almeida et al (2023: 10), contemporary tourism trends indicate a shift in tourist preferences toward experiential tourism, participatory interactions, and attractions that adapt to the needs of digital content. If the development of tourist attractions in Pule Village fails to respond to these changing dynamics, the destination's competitiveness may decline and become less competitive compared to other destinations that are more adaptable to current tourism trends.

Limitations in Tourism Collaboration and Networking

Pule Village is not yet fully integrated into a broader tourism network, whether with other tourism villages, tourism industry stakeholders, or the private sector. This lack of collaboration limits opportunities for developing cross-village tourism packages, joint promotions, and access to funding support and capacity-building initiatives that could actually strengthen the destination's competitiveness. This situation also means that Pule Village operates relatively in isolation, so its market reach and tourism distribution networks (e.g., through travel agents, tourism enthusiast communities, or corporate/CSR partners) have not yet been firmly established.

According to Pilving et al. (2019: 219), the development of collaboration requires improved communication, the formulation of clear objectives, and funding stability as key factors for the sustainability of collaboration. In the context of Pule Village, this implies that networks cannot be sufficiently built through short-term cooperation but require regular coordination mechanisms, a clear division of roles among actors, and a relatively consistent resource support scheme. Therefore, strengthening tourism collaboration and networks is a strategic aspect, not only to expand the market and enrich tourism products but also to ensure that destination development proceeds more sustainably.

Thematic Tourism Development Strategies

After discussing the factors causing the decline in tourism activity above, several recommendations regarding thematic tourism development strategies can be concluded. Some of these proposals include:

Agricultural Cultural Thematic Tourism Based on the Seasonal Calendar

According to Masilela et al. (2024: 523), assessing the authenticity of a cultural event must take into account the cultural context of the local community as the custodians of the tradition. In Pule Village, the agrarian identity is strongly evident through the Rendengan tradition, daily agricultural activities, and collectively performed harvest rituals. This cultural capital or cultural asset has the potential to be developed into thematic tourism based on the calendar of planting, cultivation, harvest, and post-harvest seasons, so that tourism activities can take place year-round and not solely depend on annual festivals. This thematic tourism also addresses the issue of a destination's reliance on specific events, as tourism products are structured to follow the relatively stable and predictable rhythms of agricultural life.



The forms of tourism activities that can be offered include educational tours about the rice planting process and traditional harvesting, accompanied by explanations of the agrarian values and social practices associated with them. These activities can be enhanced by inviting tourists to participate in the *kenduri tani* ritual and listen to the Rendengan cultural narratives from tradition bearers, ensuring that the tourism experience goes beyond the visual aspect and also conveys an understanding of cultural meaning.

To enrich the experience while connecting activity points within the village landscape, cycling tours along rice field and residential paths can be integrated as part of an interpretive tour of the agrarian landscape—for example, with stops at several points to observe cultivation phases, watch community activities, and engage in brief interactions with farmers. This entire series can be packaged into a thematic tour titled “A Day as a Pule Farmer,” which combines seasonal agricultural learning, participation in local culture, and participatory exploration of the village landscape.

Cultural and Local Tradition Educational Tourism

According to Syafrini et al. (2026:2590), cultural tourism not only opens new business opportunities that can improve the well-being of local communities but also helps preserve local culture, shape collective memory, strengthen cultural identity, and enhance the appeal of traditional villages. In other words, cultural tourism can provide dual benefits: economic benefits for residents and socio-cultural benefits for the sustainability of traditions. Balancing cultural heritage preservation and its application in tourism development is key to sustainable development (Tang et al., 2023).

In Pule Village, the richness of local traditions such as the Rendengan dance, traditional ceremonies (*tingkeban*, *mitoni*, *wiwitan*), and the value of mutual cooperation are cultural assets of high educational value. These traditions are not only worth watching but can also serve as learning materials because they contain knowledge about agrarian life, the value of togetherness, and how the community maintains social relationships and their connection with nature. Therefore, the development of educational tourism is relevant, particularly to reach segments such as students, university students, and cultural communities. In addition to expanding the tourism market, educational tourism can also serve as a means of regenerating traditional practitioners, as the involvement of the younger generation in tourism activities encourages them to learn, practice, and understand the meaning of traditions firsthand.

Activities that can be developed include Rendengan dance workshops (covering movements, history, and performance context), karawitan music workshops to strengthen performance arts, and cultural interpretation classes discussing the symbolic meanings in agrarian rituals—such as the values of gratitude, community, and traditional harvest practices. Additionally, village cultural *immersion* programs can be specifically designed for students and college students, such as living with local families, participating in daily activities, learning cooperative work practices, and taking part in a series of cultural activities according to the village calendar. For ritual activities such as *labuhan*, their implementation must be organized in accordance with ethical principles and community consent, ensuring that tourists understand the limits of their roles (as learners/observers or

limited participants) so that the activities continue to respect sacred values and applicable customary rules. With such a design, cultural tourism in Pule Village can function as an engaging educational activity that respects traditions while generating more sustainable economic and social impacts for the community.

Experiential Tourism

According to Agarwal and Singh (2022), tourism is viewed as a catalyst for curiosity about how others live within local communities; it also underscores that travelers seek to escape routine and experience the authentic side of a destination. Pule Village possesses the social and cultural capital that enables travelers to engage directly in village life, rather than merely watching attractions. The tourism activities conducted include staying in *homestays* owned by residents, riding a horse-drawn carriage to tour the village, participating in the making of woven bags from plastic fibers, preparing traditional rice-based dishes, and engaging in activities such as the waste bank, community service, or village social initiatives. Additionally, the tourism experience can be enriched through cycling tours through the village as a more flexible and intimate way to enjoy the rural landscape, rice fields, and areas of community activity, while also creating opportunities for direct interaction with the community in a relaxed and participatory atmosphere. Tourists can also be invited to participate in games in the rice fields, such as the annual activities held by residents during the Rendengan Cultural Festival, including duck-catching contests, water fights, and competitions to carry a water jug on one's head.



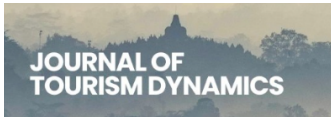
Figure 5. Duck Catching Competition

Figure 6. Water Fight Competition



CONCLUSION

The development of the Ceria Tourism Village in Pule Village reveals a rather contrasting dynamic between the success of the Rendengan Cultural Festival and the sustainability of daily tourism activities. On one hand, the Rendengan Festival has successfully highlighted Pule Village's cultural identity, attracted tourist visits, and temporarily boosted the local economy. However, on the other hand, the high reliance on the event has caused tourism activities outside the festival to decline drastically, resulting in an unstable flow of tourism revenue throughout the year. This situation is further evident in the limited diversification of tourism products, weak digital promotion management, limited institutional capacity of the management body, and a lack of collaborative networks with external parties.



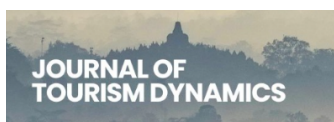
Given these realities, the development of tourism in Pule Village needs to shift from an event-based model toward a sustainable thematic tourism model rooted in agrarian values and local wisdom. Key relevant strategies include developing seasonal agricultural calendar-based thematic tourism, fostering cultural and traditional education tourism, and strengthening *experiential tourism* approaches that directly engage tourists in village life. This strategy must be supported by consistent digital promotion based on *storytelling*, capacity building for the Pokdarwis (Village Tourism Working Group), and the expansion of collaborative networks with communities, other tourism villages, and tourism partners. With this approach, Pule Village has the potential to transform from a festival-based destination into a year-round thematic tourism village that is competitive and capable of maintaining the socio-cultural and economic sustainability of its community.

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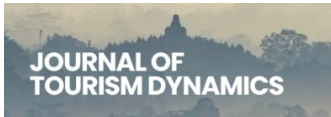
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