

# The Strategic Role of Local Elites and the Concept of Tourism Village Development in Pandeglang Regency

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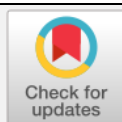
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## ABSTRACT

Pandeglang Regency is home to numerous potential tourism villages dispersed across various locations; however, their management remains fragmented and lacks comprehensive stakeholder involvement. This study examines the participation and role of local elites in tourism village development through a qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews and observations. The findings reveal that Community-Based Tourism (CBT), emphasizing community participation in organizing, managing, and developing tourism independently with self-awareness, is the most suitable concept for the region. Local elite participation manifests in two forms: mechanical participation, driven by external systemic requirements, and organic participation, arising from the elites' intrinsic awareness and commitment. The political roles of local elites are categorized as opinion leaders generating and disseminating ideas, mediators bridging aspirations and interests among stakeholders, and decision-makers formulating and implementing policy decisions. It is recommended that tourism village development actively involves local elites to ensure shared responsibility and accountability in addressing potential challenges.

**Keywords:** Community-Based Tourism; Decision-Makers; Local Elites; Mediators; Opinion Leaders; Participation; Tourism Development

## 1. Introduction

The tourism sector in Indonesia represents a strategic and priority sector, contributing significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings and supporting the national economy (Patadjenu et al., 2023). In recent years, rural tourism, including village-based tourism, has become a popular alternative trend among both domestic and international travelers (Simanjuntak & Sunarja, 2023). Pandeglang Regency, located in Banten Province, offers diverse tourism village potentials, encompassing coastal, natural, agricultural, and livestock-themed attractions. Notable examples include Gunung Torong Hot Springs, Curug Leuwi Bumi, Kadujangkung, Curug Kembar Cijeng, Rawa Dano, Rawa Buaya Muruy, and Kadung Hejo. However, despite this variety, the management of these tourism villages remains unprofessional, unstructured, and poorly coordinated with local governments. Many of the initiatives rely on self-managed efforts that are fragmented and do not fully involve stakeholders or local elites. Furthermore, insufficient infrastructure and limited funding remain persistent challenges.

The lack of comprehensive tourism education for communities, managers, and relevant stakeholders exacerbates the situation, leaving them with a limited understanding of tourism village management and development projections (Fachri, 2018). Another significant challenge is the weak capacity and participation of local elites and communities in development, further hindering the effective management of tourism villages (Siddiq, 2013). As highlighted by Masrurun and Nastiti, the success and sustainability of tourism destinations are determined by active participation and effective partnerships among stakeholders and various tourism components (Masrurun & Nastiti, 2023). According to Anggraeni et al., harmonization among tourism components is a hallmark of sustainable tourism integrity (Anggraeni et al., 2022). The Ministry of Tourism identifies four essential components for integrated tourism development: attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary services, all of which require stakeholder involvement. The role and function of local elites in developing these components are critical and often decisive for tourism success (Aprigiyana et al., 2021).

Local elites possess power, authority, ideas, and initiatives that enable them to act as agents of development (Deswimar, 2014; Kusumawarta & Sjaf, 2018). Their participation can determine the projection and future trajectory of tourism villages (Harsono & Suhandi, 2019). Sakti emphasizes that local elites play a key role in decision-making, fostering community participation, driving social change, and optimizing community potential, including directing the development of tourism villages (Sakti, 2021). Similarly, Structurally and culturally, local elites can actively mobilize and drive development initiatives (Priyanto, 2011; Yulida et al., 2020).

Pribadi describes local elites as having loosely organized political networks necessary for successful development initiatives (Pribadi, 2015). Rahmat and Wicaksono argue that local elites can accumulate wealth for specific purposes (Rahmat, B., & Wicaksono, 2017). Cahyana and Nugroho state that stakeholders and local elites possess the necessary knowledge to manage tourism villages and foster social participation (Cahyana & Nugroho, 2019). The activities of local elites, when focused on tourism village development, significantly enhance progress and benefit communities, provided there is a collective commitment. Effective collective action can enhance community solidarity, identity, and empowerment, strengthening locals' negotiation positions with external actors—a common practice in developed countries (Grunwell & Ha, 2014).

Nonetheless, varying findings highlight gaps in the role of local elites in tourism village management. Local elites in Jatiluwih Village, Bali, have not fully aligned their efforts with

community interests (Dewi, 2013; Iriani & Mahendra, 2014). Husni and Safaat report challenges for local elites in supporting fishermen in Teluk Bakau, whose livelihoods were disrupted by coastal reclamation (Husni & Safaat, 2019). Similarly, Qonita highlights the social gap between local elites and indigenous communities, hindering tourism village development in Watukang Village, East Java (Qonita, 2018). Priyamanaya and Rijanta identify difficulties in fostering local elite and community awareness for tourism and village resilience (Priyamanaya & Rijanta, 2020).

These findings underscore research, social, and practical gaps in the role of local elites in tourism village management. Research gaps arise from varying theories, methods, and objectives, resulting in paradoxical findings. Social gaps reflect competition for access to productive economic resources, while practical gaps stem from diverse approaches employed by elites in developing tourism villages. On the one hand, elites may demonstrate openness and support, while on the other, their efforts may not prioritize tourism sustainability or community welfare. In practice, local elites often represent individual or group interests, creating conflicts over productive economic access, natural resources, and human resources.

The issue becomes more complex when local elites alternate roles between representing community and government interests. This duality introduces bias when prioritizing productive economic development, making it difficult to discern whether tourism village development is a government initiative or a community-driven effort. Consequently, tourism village management often becomes sluggish and directionless. However, when focusing on the synergy among stakeholders, elites, and communities, the priority should be fostering collective commitment. This involves empowering local elites to act as opinion leaders, decision-makers, and drivers of tourism village sustainability.

Local elites—including village officials, religious leaders, cultural figures, youth leaders, women leaders, and educators—hold positions that amplify their voices and ideas. As opinion leaders and decision-makers at the village level, these elites can influence community acceptance due to their competence, capacity, and authority. However, in practice, not all elite ideas and initiatives align, necessitating synergy and role harmonization. Challenges such as diverse interests, limited access, insufficient funding, and inadequate planning require local elites to exercise strategic thinking to advance tourism villages.

This study aims to identify an appropriate tourism village development concept for Pandeglang Regency and map the strategic role of local elites in tourism village development. The research provides practical contributions to tourism village development and conceptual insights for determining strategic directions. The study's uniqueness lies in examining how local elites configure their roles and functions in tourism village development and how their dual roles as government and community representatives shape societal structures and cultures, fostering collective commitment.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Elite Theory**

The concept of elites generally refers to individuals or groups holding high-ranking positions. Nye defines elites as groups at the forefront of specific fields who wield power (Nye, 1977). Kolegar describes elites as “the ruling class,” encompassing individuals with formal or informal authority (Kolegar, 1967). According to Varma, elites can be categorized into two groups: political elites and non-political elites (Varma, 2001). Political elites are those occupying political positions within executive and legislative institutions, typically elected through electoral processes. In contrast, non-political elites are individuals with social roles who exert

influence within society, such as religious leaders, traditional figures, youth leaders, and women leaders.

Robert Putnam offers three models for analyzing elites: positional analysis, which places elites within organizational structures that contribute the most to society; reputational analysis, which regards elites as influential individuals whose decisions affect outcomes, even if they lack formal organizational positions; and decision analysis, which identifies elites as influential figures whose ideas and perspectives guide decision-making processes.

Elites, both explicitly and implicitly, hold power and authority, often formalized by their positions (Haryanto, 2017). According to Andrain, elite authority is derived from five sources: primordial sources, which relate to inherited traits or lineage providing distinct characteristics; sacred sources, perceived as divine or sacred rights, such as those held by kings, religious leaders, or traditional elders; instrumental sources, encompassing skills or wealth owned by elites; personal sources, including charisma and personal appeal; and legal or constitutional sources, which formalize authority through legal frameworks (Andrain, 1992).

Some theoretical perspectives suggest that local elites derive power from sources extending beyond territorial boundaries, with their influence surpassing geographic limits. For instance, elites often obtain social status from historical lineage, such as a village imam descending from early settlers. Historical settlement patterns structure elite status within villages and also shape relationships among elites across villages. Families that settle together or found neighboring communities establish shared and mutually reinforcing claims to resources and social capital. However, in regions lacking a unified settlement history, local elites' social status may remain fragmented across villages (Wilfahrt, 2018).

Scholarly accounts highlight several roles of local elites in development: as opinion leaders, they consistently generate and direct ideas and initiatives; as decision-makers, they possess the authority to create policies based on their sources of power; as development innovators, they act as catalysts for progress; and as problem solvers, they resolve societal issues and challenges.

## 2.2. Tourism Villages

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Culture and Tourism No. 26 of 2010, a tourism village is defined as a blend of attractions, accommodations, and supporting facilities integrated into the social structure of the community and aligned with its social, cultural, and ecological norms. Purwanggono describes tourism villages as a series of tourism activities associated with rural areas, characterized by unique cultural and social traits (Purwanggono, 2010). Similarly, Inskeep defines tourism villages as a form of tourism where small groups of visitors experience traditional community life in or near remote villages, delving into local lifestyles (Inskeep, 1987).

Pearce emphasizes that the development of tourism villages is a process aimed at advancing the potential of such villages (Pearce, 1995). The primary goals include fostering cultural and economic resilience to enable communities to achieve self-reliance. Development efforts target providing opportunities and support for communities to become more active, creative, and proactive in managing and enhancing their local tourism attractions (Adikampana et al., 2019). Tourism has also been shown to create job opportunities and significantly impact community income levels (Darmayanti & Oka, 2020; Ramadani et al., 2022; Yudiana & Wahyudiono, 2020).

Priasukmana and Mulyadin outline seven criteria that a village must meet to qualify as a tourism village: (1) adequate transportation accessibility, allowing visitors to utilize various modes of transport; (2) appealing attractions, such as ecological landscapes, art, traditions,



history, or unique local cuisines developed into tourist offerings; (3) openness and high appreciation from the local community and authorities toward tourism and visitors; (4) guaranteed safety and security; (5) availability of adequate accommodations, telecommunications, and workforce; (6) a cool or temperate climate; and (7) proximity to other well-known tourist destinations recognized by the broader public (Priasukmana & Mulyadin, 2001).

### 3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, which, according to Berger et al., is a space for various research practices aiming to interpret meaning at each stage (Berger et al., 1996). The research also adopts a constructivist perspective, viewing social spaces and the role of elites as representations of various mental constructs reflected in social situations, which are locally specific and distinctive. The study was conducted in Pandeglang Regency over six months in 2022. Data collection techniques involved interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted to explore data regarding the role of local elites and the concept of tourism village development that could be applied. At the same time, observations were aimed at examining the potential of tourism villages and identifying issues related to their development.

The informants in this study were divided into three categories: (1) Key Informants, who are knowledgeable about the concepts and practices of tourism village development; (2) Main Informants, who are the primary actors in the practice of tourism village development; and (3) Supporting Informants, who provide additional relevant information. The criteria for selecting informants were based on analyzing their roles to generate relevant information, identifying the availability of informants in the field, and determining the most appropriate informants to avoid information bias. Informant selection was done through criterion sampling, where informants were chosen based on established criteria, specifically local elites. The chosen informants were local elites from the study area who understood the issues, could argue well, experienced the impacts of the issues being studied, and were directly involved in those issues.

Based on the three-stage informant selection process, the informants were grouped into three categories based on the sources of authority they held: (1) Elites with Formal Political Authority, such as the Department of Tourism (government agency responsible for tourism development), Sub-district Heads (Camat, administrative leaders of sub-districts), Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis) (community-based organizations promoting tourism), Village Heads (Kepala Desa, leaders of village administrations), Hamlet Heads (Kepala Dusun, leaders of smaller administrative units within villages), Village Consultative Boards (BPD) (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa, councils that oversee village governance), Neighborhood Associations (RW) (Rukun Warga, community-level administrative units), and Community Associations (RT) (Rukun Tetangga, smaller neighborhood administrative units); (2) Elites with Informal (Social and Religious) Authority, such as the heads of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, national council of Islamic scholars), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (a prominent Islamic organization in Indonesia), religious leaders like Kiai (respected Islamic scholars), Mosque Management Boards (DKM) (Dewan Kemakmuran Masjid, committees managing mosque activities), Youth Organizations (Karang Taruna) (community youth organizations for social empowerment), and women's groups (informal community organizations focusing on women's activities); and (3) Elites with Authority Based on Customary Power, such as the heads of the Banten Family Potential Development Agency (BPPKB) (Badan Pengembangan Potensi Keluarga Banten, an organization promoting the cultural and family potential of the Banten community)..

**Table 1. Map of Key Informants**

Group	Key Informants	Type of Informant
Government	Department of Tourism, Sub-district Head, Village Head, Hamlet Head, BPD Chairperson, Pokdarwis	Key Informants
Community Leaders	MUI Head, NU Chairperson, Muhammadiyah Chairperson, Ustadz, Kiai, Karang Taruna, Women's Leaders, Educators	Supporting Informants
Business Leaders	KADIN Chairperson	Key Informants
Traditional Leaders	Hamlet Head, RW, RT, BPPKB Chairperson	Main Informants

The unit of analysis in this research pertains to the role of local elites in tourism village development and the theoretical and practical exploration of tourism village development concepts. The focus of the study includes individuals, groups, and community organizations that are involved in and contribute to the development of tourism villages. Observations were made at the macro (local government), mezzo (sub-district), and micro (village) levels to assess the role and contribution of local elites in these domains. The data analysis used Miles and Huberman's model, which emphasizes collectivity, and data presentation, and concludes with a principle of openness and skepticism (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

Data reduction was performed by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and modifying data as necessary to ensure comprehensive and holistic data. The next step involved presenting the data to provide an understanding and explanation of the findings. The data from interviews and observations were collected, analyzed, categorized, and reduced into two main categories: (1) concepts of tourism village development and (2) the role of local elites in tourism village development. The final step in data reduction was drawing conclusions to address the research questions and reveal the novelty of the study. The conclusion process maintained openness and skepticism to preserve neutrality and ensure data consistency.

The research design has limitations, as it focuses solely on the strategic roles of local elites, not on the issues of the tourism village itself, such as its forms, potentials, promotion, or infrastructure. Therefore, this study only illustrates how the roles of local elites, such as when they act as opinion leaders, mediators, and decision-makers, shape the development process. The analysis used in this study refers to elite analysis: positional and reputational. However, the research is open to addressing issues faced by tourism village managers, including their challenges. One outcome of this research is an implementable concept for tourism village development.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Tourism Village Development Concept in Pandeglang Regency

Tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency have developed significantly. For instance, the Sukarame Tourism Village, Kadu Engang Tourism Village, and Kampung Domba Tourism Village have been successful. These villages stand out due to the integration of natural resources and the cultural potential of the community. The management of these tourism villages is marked by creativity, innovation, and support from both the government and the private sector. According to Saepudin et al., the integration of natural beauty, rural life, and

agricultural potential, when professionally managed and seriously planned, can lead to significant economic growth for the region (Saepudin et al., 2017).

However, despite the advantages of tourism in Pandeglang Regency, several challenges remain, including (1) insufficient connectivity and basic services as well as infrastructure to meet the needs of tourists; (2) the uncertainty of investment climates and limited budgets for tourism village managers; (3) the lack of professional management; (4) weak publicity of tourism potentials; and (5) tourism has not been integrated as a central issue in regional development. These implications suggest that tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency require a concept that can synergize various natural resources, human resources, and stakeholder support.

Considering the challenges and potential in developing tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency and observing the success of tourism villages in other regions with similar characteristics, the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) concept is a strategic and implementable approach. CBT emphasizes community participation in organizing, managing, and developing tourism independently with self-awareness. Timothy (1999) describes CBT as a form of tourism that provides opportunities for communities to control and be involved in tourism development management. This is in alignment with Nicole (2006), who defines CBT as a tourism model that offers local communities the chance to understand, manage, and develop tourism collaboratively (Nicole, 2006), and Suansri, who sees CBT as a tourism model that considers environmental, social, and cultural sustainability (Suansri, 2003).

According to Nicole, three key elements must be present in CBT: (1) local community participation in tourism development management; (2) equitable access to economic opportunities for all layers of society; and (3) capacity building for local communities to position them as active agents of development (Nicole, 2006). Suansri identified five principles of CBT that were successfully implemented in Thailand (Suansri, 2003). The first is the economic principle, which includes providing stimulus for the community, creating job opportunities, and fostering productive economic activities. Second, the social principle includes schemes to improve quality of life, gender equity, a sense of belonging, and institutional strengthening. Third, cultural principles emphasize respecting norms and traditions through assimilation and acculturation. Fourth, the principle of sustainability and ecosystem conservation, such as the Go Green approach. Fifth the political principle, which aims to increase participation and expand community access to tourism destinations.

There are at least four aspects that need to be prepared when developing the CBT concept in Pandeglang Regency: First, synergy and balance of roles between the community, government, and the private sector. Many tourism villages have yet to receive intensive guidance from the government, so management has not aligned with regulations or development goals. The institutional structure of tourism villages is still rudimentary and not professionally managed, while the lack of capital exacerbates the difficulty in developing tourism villages. The private sector has not yet recognized the potential of tourism villages or the projected benefits.

Second, empowerment and capacity building for the community. Empowering the community aligns with community-based development concepts, where communities should be positioned as the subjects of development. To date, tourism development has not followed schemes that improve economic welfare, primarily due to traditional management practices, low community awareness, limited participation, and poorly coordinated policies. According to Susiana, community empowerment can be achieved by providing skills relevant to the tourism village context, such as institutional management, environmental conservation practices,

microenterprise development, and marketing strategies (Susiana, 2018). Empowerment in tourism ensures that local community concerns about tourism development are heard, and the community becomes part of the decision-making process, requiring an appropriate power structure and effective agencies to enable members to express their opinions (Tian et al., 2023).

Third, tourism village development regulations. Regulations refer to policies or programs established by the government regarding tourism village development. Currently, tourism villages listed in the Regional Tourism Development Plan of Pandeglang Regency are limited and require data adjustments. The criteria for tourism villages should also be expanded to identify the potential of existing tourism villages fully. Regulations should be supplemented with strategies for securing grant funding, both at the national and international levels.

Fourth, sustainability of tourism villages. The concept of sustainability refers to tourism that is responsive to the needs and satisfaction of tourists, involves direct community participation, and emphasizes long-term protection and management. Tourism village development should aim to meet economic, social, cultural, aesthetic, environmental, and biodiversity needs, as well as the social life cycle. Economically, tourism villages need to balance the costs incurred by tourists with the facilities provided, ensuring satisfaction. Environmentally, the sustainability of tourism villages should maintain the beauty and balance of natural ecosystems for long-term benefits. Finally, in terms of institutional capacity, tourism villages must be able to operate tourism activities professionally and respond to trends in tourism management.

Wiwin provides examples of successful CBT implementation in Indonesia, such as Pandawa Beach, Kedongan Beach in Badung, Tanah Lot in Tabanan, Monkey Forest Ubud, and Ceking Terracing in Gianyar, Bali, as well as Penglipuran Village in Bangli Regency (Wiwin, 2018). These successes demonstrate that CBT-based tourism village development has positively impacted community economic life through the synergy of management policies with various parties. Other successful examples of CBT implementation include Dayung Trawas Mojokerto and Pangandaran Beach, where CBT has been fully and optimally implemented, resulting in positive impacts on village progress.

Given the explanation of the CBT concept above, it is evident how existing opportunities can be maximized for tourism village development. As a tourism village concept for Pandeglang Regency, CBT is assumed to not only accelerate tourism village development but also support the process of community capacity building, provide opportunities for the community to fully benefit economically, and offer a model for professionally managed tourism villages. The findings regarding the CBT concept answer the research question about the appropriate tourism village concept for Pandeglang Regency. Despite the challenges, potential, and opportunities, if CBT is implemented comprehensively, tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency will become an inspiration for tourism village management in other regions. These tourism villages will become icons of successful regional tourism development, generating regional income while empowering the community.

The recommendation based on the CBT concept findings is that local elites should direct their thoughts, opinions, influence, power, and actions toward realizing the CBT concept for mutual progress and welfare. CBT is a measurable, directed, and implementable concept that impacts the professionalism of tourism village management strengthens empowerment, and increases community participation. The first step for local elites in implementing CBT is to map natural resources and human resources and create a favorable tourism climate, followed by concrete actions to apply the concept.



## **4.2. The Role of Local Elites in Tourism Village Development**

The development of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency is essentially a miniature representation of the overall tourism development concept, which requires the involvement of stakeholders. The local government and communities have undertaken various efforts and initiatives to ensure that tourism villages thrive and contribute to village advancement. However, the challenges in these areas reveal that tourism village management is problematic, particularly concerning regulations, funding, community capacity building, and the lack of professional management. This indicates that the development of tourism villages requires contributions from various parties and cannot be approached in isolation, as it involves numerous aspects. In the development of tourism destinations, it is necessary to involve stakeholders (local elites), especially in the strategic and tactical planning process, so that the role of local elites significantly impacts the sustainability of tourism (Hatipoglu et al., 2016). Elites, with their skills and advantages, can provide direction, influence, and drive development, including in tourism village development.

In social life, it is not difficult to identify groups of individuals who play a significant role and have a major influence within the community. These groups gain greater influence because they possess advantages that differentiate them from other groups in society. With these advantages, they can manage and mobilize potential in various aspects of life. At the same time, these groups can optimize their role and influence in determining the direction of community life and development policies. Their advantages place them in a strategic position within society, and with their capacity, they can dominate community life following specific interests. This group is theoretically and practically referred to as an elite group.

Regarding the presence of elite groups and tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency, the field data shows that the speed at which tourism villages either lag or rapidly develop depends on the influence and contributions of local elites. In the social life of the people of Pandeglang, the influence of local elites is greater than that of other community members. In practice, local elites can easily direct, control, and manage the community, as well as control the village's natural resources. The authority they possess can strengthen whether the community moves toward progress or regression. The potential of local elites should be optimized to ensure that development and community change lead to the advancement and development of tourism villages. If this is the case, both the elite group and the community will share an interest in developing tourism villages that are expected to contribute to increased creativity and the productive economy of the community.

Based on field findings, local elites play a strategic role in influencing public opinion, presenting critical ideas and concepts, and having the capacity to make decisions related to tourism village development. In terms of authority in the development of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency, local elites are divided into four categories. First, elites with primordial authority, such as community leaders, traditional leaders, and martial arts experts. Second, elites whose authority comes from something considered sacred, such as religious leaders, Ustads, and Kiais. Third, elites whose authority is derived from their skills or wealth, such as entrepreneurs and practitioners. Fourth, elites with authority derived from legal or constitutional aspects, such as officials from the Department of Tourism, Sub-district Heads, Village Heads, Village Consultative Boards, MUI Chairpersons, and Karang Taruna, are legally appointed to these positions.

In the development of tourism villages, local elites with primordial authority (community and traditional leaders) focus more on ideas and concepts, as well as movements to preserve ecosystems by respecting long-established cultural norms. Religious leaders emphasize how

tourism village development should uphold religious values and principles, ensuring that ideas and actions align with the application of religious teachings and norms. Meanwhile, entrepreneurs and local community leaders focus on the productive economic aspects that the presence of the tourism village can generate. Their actions are centered on strengthening the local economy, providing facilities capital for businesses, and developing microenterprises within the community. Elites in formal village positions focus on accelerating tourism village programs as part of regional development at the macro level. These elites oversee and provide input to ensure that the tourism village development aligns with the regional development agenda. As such, the slogan "Pandeglang as a Tourism City" can be measured for its relevance and alignment.

Despite the differences in interests and development orientations among local elites, these variations create specific configurations in the management and control of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency. These configurations contribute to the competitive advantages of tourism villages in the region. Some tourism villages emphasize religious tourism, pilgrimage to sacred ancestral graves, and cultural heritage tracing, which has developed through the initiatives of local religious leaders such as Kiais and Ustads. Several government elites, such as officials from the Department of Tourism, Sub-district Heads, and Village Heads, approach tourism village managers to ensure that tourism village development aligns with the regional development plan. This concept is then adopted by the managers, who perceive the tourism village as a manifestation of Pandeglang's identity as "the city of a thousand santris," symbolizing its character as a religious city.

Several elites around tourism villages, like Setu Cikempong, Menes, and Cikeudal, have similar ideas. Setu tourism is designed with gates that symbolize Islamic symbols. The goal of this concept is to ensure that Islamic values are maintained and serve as symbols of community obedience. Thus, elites with traditional sources of authority in tourism village development focus on implementing cultural and religious norms. In contrast, elites whose authority stems from expertise and wealth (entrepreneurs) often think about tourism village development that aligns with microenterprise development. Both of these groups share a common goal: tourism villages should serve as tools to improve community welfare.

The common thread among the different ideas and interests of these elites lies in their efforts to initiate and encourage improvements in tourism village infrastructure, making it easier for tourists to access destinations and ensuring a comfortable, satisfying experience. The government has also made efforts to improve tourism village infrastructure, as seen in the example of Girijaya Village. Another interesting effort is seen in the village elites (Village Head, BPD, and Karang Taruna) in the Sumur District supporting the production of pandan weavings and one-horned rhinoceros statues as village and regional icons by providing necessary stimulus funds. Similarly, the elites around natural tourism in Carita continue to explore new tourism concepts to revive the stagnant beach tourism by collaborating with the relevant departments for promotion.

All these efforts by the elites create a socio-political configuration that impacts their roles, power, and authority in developing tourism villages.

**Table 2. Map of Roles and Authority**

Elite	Source of Authority	Role	Contribution
Department of Tourism, Sub-district Head	Formal Political Structure	Decision Maker, Innovator	Tourism programs implemented

Elite	Source of Authority	Role	Contribution
Village Head	Formal Political Structure	Decision Maker, Innovator	Tourism village advancement
RT/RW/Village Head	Formal Political Structure	Innovator	Conceptualizing tourism village ideas
Kiai	Social, Religious	Opinion Leader, Mediator, Innovator	Promoting critical community awareness
Community Leader – Traditional Leader	Social, Cultural	Opinion Leader, Mediator, Innovator	Encouraging participation and strengthening community capacity
Local Entrepreneur	Social, Cultural, Economic	Opinion Leader, Decision Maker, Mediator	Encouraging participation and strengthening community capacity

From the table above, there are three roles of local elites in tourism village development in Pandeglang Regency: (1) elites as opinion leaders, (2) elites as mediators, and (3) elites as decision-makers. These roles align with three types of elite role analysis: positional analysis, reputational analysis, and decision analysis. These three roles have concrete impacts on tourism village development, both in conceptual and tactical terms. The conceptual impact is evident when local elites contribute ideas and concepts for tourism village development, which are then adopted as a shared concept. The tactical impact is seen when local elites push for concrete tactical actions in tourism village development, such as advocating for government policies to create regulations and service management standards. In practice, the key issue is how to balance the needs and perspectives of different stakeholders and manage them equitably and efficiently (Gao & Wu, 2017).

The findings related to the role of local elites answer the research question regarding the roles of local elites in tourism village development in Pandeglang Regency. Although only three core roles were identified, these roles are crucial in determining the direction of tourism village development. As opinion leaders, local elites work hard to build public opinion through both formal and informal meetings. As mediators, elites position themselves as groups that listen to various parties' aspirations and formulate concepts that benefit all. As decision-makers, local elites are required to make strategic decisions for the sustainable implementation of tourism village development. The recommendations related to the role of local elites suggest that local elites need to sit together to align their thoughts, ideas, influence, and actions toward tourism village development and ensure that the existing configuration of interests is also aimed at developing tourism villages. Detailed explanations of these roles are provided below.

#### 4.2.1. Local Elites as Opinion Leaders

Referring to the assumption that communication plays a strategic role, especially in rural development, one of the factors determining the success of development is the role of opinion leaders. Conceptually, opinion leaders are individuals who have the task of generating ideas and conveying them to the public; in other words, serving as channels for information. Bahfiarti explains that opinion leaders are information providers or thought leaders who influence societal behavior (Bahfiarti, 2016). Their characteristics include having access to and the ability to acquire extensive information, maintaining social relationships with the public, possessing

logical awareness, innovative thinking, and being open to new ideas and concepts (Zhang et al., 2020). Although mass media plays a significant role in delivering information to the public, it is the opinion leaders who, in reality, provide explanations, motivation, influence, and drive public participation. To foster tourism village development, the role of opinion leaders is crucial in determining the success or failure of such efforts.

In the development of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency, opinion leaders play a pivotal role. With the abilities they possess, local elites can distribute progressive views related to (1) the modernization of tourism village management, (2) presenting different perspectives on the prospects of tourism villages, (3) motivating and convincing the public of the economic benefits so that the community can maximize its potential, and (4) coordinating individuals or tourism awareness groups to optimize available natural resources. Given their ability to influence and mobilize the public, these roles can only be played by local elites. Therefore, local elites are adept at communicating to persuade and influence public attitudes and behavior. To ensure that tourism village development is as effective and optimal as possible, local elites must be skilled communicators so that the progress of tourism village development can be measured and controlled.

The role of local elites as opinion leaders in this study is largely carried out by elites with primordial sources of authority (community leaders and entrepreneurs). Their role is visible when they build public opinion and present ideas about the promising prospects of tourism villages for the local economy. A community leader and entrepreneur might try to convince the public by saying, "Tanjung Lesung Tourism is a national tourist destination; we must not remain passive but prepare to be at the forefront of tourism village management." This opinion is shared by local elites to provide clarification and influence the public, urging them to prepare as much as possible for the existence of Tanjung Lesung tourism. In other words, these local elites encourage community empowerment so that they can participate and benefit from the tourism area.

As opinion leaders, local elites also attempt to convince government officials by creating a master plan for tourism villages that is more measurable, focused, and binding, to improve the economic growth of the village. These local elites, as opinion leaders, do not hesitate to express their thoughts and views in both formal forums, such as village or hamlet meetings, and informal gatherings, such as community discussions. Ideas about Tanjung Lesung tourism continue to be disseminated to gauge public response and assess the community's ability to utilize the tourism area for their welfare. A cultural approach is used by the opinion leaders to present their ideas, ensuring that the concepts of tourism village development are easily accepted and that the community can easily participate. As a result, many members of the public, whose minds are open, quickly mobilize all available potential to benefit from the presence of the tourism village.

The role of local elites as opinion leaders is also visible in formulating ideas and mobilizing the public regarding the development of marine tourism villages along Cibaliung Road. Several local elites have proposed that Cibaliung, aside from its marine potential, also boasts stunning natural views. It is not uncommon for tourists to capture these views, either as documentation or social media content. This phenomenon was then responded to by local elites, who proposed creating rest stops for drivers and providing local food and beverages. The process of mobilizing the public to utilize these spots was not easy; in addition to the public's uncertainty, they also faced obstacles such as insufficient business capital. For local elites, developing a tourism village requires not only a good concept but also the financial readiness of elites to mobilize the community.



Referring to the elite theory outlined above, two analyses are used to examine the role of elites as opinion leaders: reputational analysis and decision analysis. First, reputational analysis. This analysis is driven by the strong role and numerous contributions made by elites. However, these elites may not be part of the village's institutional structure or hold formal positions; their ideas and concepts always direct tourism village development strategies that local government officials later adopt. Ideas for tourism village development, such as the strategy for Tanjung Lesung tourism or the concept of digital marketing, are among the contributions of elites in tourism development. Similarly, ideas about strengthening the business capacity of SMEs around tourism villages and expanding the market to support the development of a productive economy are visible in the efforts of elite community leaders, religious leaders, youth leaders, and traditional leaders in villages like Menes, Girijaya, Pasirawi, Cibodas, Gunungsari, and Cibaliung.

Reputational analysis positions local elites as individuals who exert influence over ideas, concepts, and organizational decisions, even though they may not hold specific positions within an organization. This means that these elite groups are autonomous, emerging organically from below, not imposed by structural authority, yet maintaining a good reputation for conveying their opinions and exerting influence. In reputational analysis, the interaction between elites and the community is informal, horizontal, and egalitarian. Therefore, both elites and the community are equal in expressing ideas and concepts, as well as in driving the development of tourism villages. The influence of their ideas and concepts is not accompanied by structural pressure, allowing the community to accept or reject the ideas presented by the elites freely.

The second analysis is decision analysis. In this analysis, local elites are positioned as individuals with substantial influence within the community, making their ideas and concepts a point of reference in decision-making related to tourism village development. Practically, this analysis pertains to ideas and concepts presented by elites with formal sources of authority (village officials, hamlet heads, RT, RW, BPD, MUI, and Karang Taruna). These elites have the responsibility to coordinate, hold meetings, and collaborate with other elites at the hamlet, village, and sub-district levels. The ideas that influence decision-making are those related to the concept of tourism village development, which must begin with measurable, directed, and implementable planning and policies.

Nye explains that every society will be governed by a small group of individuals who possess the necessary qualifications (Nye, 1977). This group called the elite, can reach the centers of power and occupy the highest levels of authority in society. With their capacity, elites can easily build public opinion, influence, and mobilize the community. The elites heavily influence the development and existence of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency. For instance, the progress or stagnation of tourism villages such as Tanjung Lesung, Cibaliung, Cikoromoy, and Muruy is determined by these elites. So far, the tourism villages have not seen significant development, though they have not been in decline either. They are relatively stagnant, awaiting improvements in management, infrastructure, and funding.

The stagnation in the management of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency is also related to the obstacles faced by local elites in promoting tourism village development. These obstacles include: First, structural barriers, where many local elites face resistance from bureaucratic elites who prioritize structural ego and consider themselves the most authoritative. This barrier causes the ideas and proposals from other elites to conflict with the interests of elites who do not support tourism village development. This elitist attitude within the bureaucracy is evident in the lack of transparency in policy information, as well as in the fact that tourism village programs are not fully supported and are left to develop their models.

Second, cultural barriers, where the community lacks concern and awareness about tourism village development. The public does not have a long-term vision of how to manage and benefit from the existence of tourism villages. Third, economic or funding barriers are encountered in nearly all tourism village management efforts, particularly due to the challenges in securing funds for tourism village operations. Available funds are limited to retribution fees, which have minimal impact on the development of the tourism village.

#### **4.2.2. Elites as Mediators**

The second role of elites is as mediators in development. Elites as mediators in development refer to their role in bridging the interests of the village government's development programs with the community. In tourism village development, local elites as mediators focus on ensuring that the formulations and master plans for tourism village development are fully understood by the village government, the private sector, and the community, thus becoming a shared commitment. Building this shared commitment regarding tourism villages is not easy in practice; it requires repeated meetings and dialogues. Local elites then assume the role of mediator. This role can be performed by elites with primordial sources of authority as well as those with formal legal authority, such as BPD members, village heads, community leaders, and traditional leaders.

In several mediation events initiated to formulate and agree on the concept of tourism village development, elites generally use a cultural and familial approach, which is informal and internal in nature. Providing insights into the importance of the role of Village-Owned Enterprises and autonomous tourism village institutions or emphasizing the need for tourism village programs to be included in the Regional Development Planning Document with continuous funding were formulations successfully agreed upon during several rounds of mediation. Integrating independent tourism village programs into the master plan for macro-level tourism village planning and development is among the ideas and efforts that were successfully negotiated by local elites as mediators.

The reputational analysis is evident when elites act as mediators in formulating various ideas, concepts, and interests regarding issues that arise in tourism village management. Elites with good reputations (even without holding formal positions) find it easier to mediate, gain trust, and be heard, as they are considered to have broader knowledge and experience. For example, when local elites mediate for a community wanting to benefit from the existence of tourism villages (such as Curug Putri, Gunung Aseupan in Jiput, and Carita Beach), but the village government does not yet have specific regulations regarding the desired formulation, in such situations, local elites provide a solution for both parties, one of which is negotiating access arrangements, SMEs, retribution, and environmental security, which are then agreed upon by both parties.

Barriers to implementing the ideas and concepts of elites as mediators can be seen when elites face varying ideas and concepts over regulations that have yet to be established. For example, there is a lack of regulation on service standards and the infrastructure that must be available in tourism villages, as well as the implementation of retribution policies that are not yet fully comprehensive. Discussions on such matters sometimes do not yield results, as there is no regulatory framework to guide and bind the process. Existing regulations are still general and do not address operational and service standards. Another barrier is the lack of a structured and regular forum to accommodate ideas and concepts, meaning that mediation related to tourism village development only occurs when there is a configuration of ideas, interests, and issues at hand.

### 4.2.3. Elites as Decision Makers

The third role of elites is as decision-makers. Muktamar et al., 2024., state that decision-making is the process of sorting through and ensuring various aspects of uncertain situations (Muktamar et al., 2024). Wisesa explains that decision-making is the knowledge and art of selecting the best solution from many possible alternatives or choosing an action from a range of potential solutions to resolve problems (Wisesa, 2011). Decision-makers are individuals or groups involved in the decision-making process. Local elites, as decision-makers, step in to decide on solutions and choices that are considered the best for all parties involved.

This role is predominantly played by elites with formal sources of authority, such as village heads, BPD (Village Consultative Board), LMD (Village Development Agency), MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council), Bumdes (Village-Owned Enterprises), Karang Taruna (Youth Organization), and PKK (Family Welfare Movement). These elites create studies on tourism village development that are articulated in work programs and the RPJMD (Regional Development Planning Document). The recommendations or ideas from these elites are conveyed in informal daily meetings, either at tourism village locations or in meeting rooms where elites meet with the public to make decisions or policies. Generally, as decision-makers, elites are also confronted with other elites who have similar roles and influence. Decision-making usually occurs in formal meetings involving various parties to reach an agreement.

Some ideas and concepts that have been successfully decided upon for tourism village development in village meetings include (1) the development and expansion of criteria for tourism villages so that existing tourism villages can be categorized as fulfilling the necessary elements. For example, the crocodile tourist attraction in Muruy Village, the waterfall attraction in Girijaya Village, or the Leuwi Bumi waterfall attraction; (2) the development of institutional management of tourism villages to make the management of tourism villages more professional, structured, measurable, and prospective; (3) the expansion of tourism village areas so that the community can more easily, comfortably, and have designated areas to sell local products; (4) strengthening capacity and social capital so that the community can participate and respond quickly to business opportunities arising from the existing tourism villages.

The positional analysis of elites in their role as decision-makers reveals how easily local elites make decisions and synergize with various parties to develop tourism villages due to the position and authority they hold. In positional analysis, elites make decisions because of the authority tied to their positions and social status. This finding emphasizes that by using formal structural power, decisions are made more quickly and easily agreed upon and implemented. The key lies in the power and authority that can direct and motivate the community to agree on decisions. The strength of these elites lies in their authority and positions, and with this authority, elites have the legitimacy to make decisions, regulate, guide, and mobilize all parties.

The obstacles faced by elites when performing their roles as decision-makers include the limited range of solutions caused by the lack of tourism village management facilities. Another obstacle is the limited availability of human resources, meaning decision-making is centralized within the elites and does not yet involve the community as a whole. As a result, elites need to conduct socialization and dissemination of information to ensure that the community understands and participates in the development of the tourism village.

## 5. Conclusion

The role of local elites in the development of tourism villages in Pandeglang Regency is highly strategic and pivotal. Local elites, such as village officials, religious leaders, traditional leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, and educators, play a key role in practice. In addition to

generating ideas and concepts related to the sustainability of tourism villages, these local elites work alongside the community, engaging intensively with them in efforts to develop tourism villages. There are three forms of local elite roles in tourism village development: (1) opinion leaders, who shape and distribute opinions, ideas, concepts, and thoughts related to the development of tourism villages and assess responses to these ideas as part of evaluation and reinforcement; (2) mediators, who bridge the aspirations of the community, government, and private sector in developing tourism villages. This role is strengthened when there are differences in aspirations and interests among elites in developing tourism villages, with mediation used to find a compromise that can be agreed upon, implemented, and beneficial to all parties; (3) decision-makers, who make decisions based on knowledge, experience, and aspirations related to the development and sustainability of tourism villages. These decisions are made as strategic and tactical policies based on strong arguments for why these decisions must be taken.

The appropriate concept for tourism village development in Pandeglang Regency is Community-Based Tourism (CBT). This tourism model emphasizes community participation in managing, organizing, and developing tourism independently with self-awareness. The CBT concept consists of four aspects: (1) synergy of roles between the community, government, and private sector, conceptualized across various sectors related to tourism village development; (2) strengthening community capacity through empowerment and the development of skills necessary for managing tourism villages; (3) regulation, referring to policies or development programs that drive tourism village development, including capital, infrastructure, and human resources; and (4) sustainability, ensuring that tourism village programs are built for the long term. Synergy is the key to successful tourism village management, where stakeholders regard tourism villages as a collective program that must be fought for and developed together. Strengthening community capacity is achieved by providing ongoing assistance and training to enhance capacity building and by granting access to tourism village development.

Positional analysis shows that the position of elites within the community facilitates their decision-making and the establishment of various synergies with other parties. Elites occupy a strategic position within the community, making it easier for them to offer ideas, concepts, or opinions related to tourism village development. The reputational analysis highlights the strong role and numerous contributions of elites as a result of their positive reputation. The reputation attached to an elite's personality enables them to easily gain trust, with their ideas and proposals being readily accepted as if guaranteed by the community. Reputation makes it easier for elites to gain support from various parties, including securing funding. Decision analysis focuses on the efforts of elites in presenting ideas and proposals for tourism village development, with decisions being made formally or informally involving various parties.

The recommendations resulting from this study are: (1) tourism village development should involve local elites so that all parties can be responsible when issues arise; (2) tourism village programs should be sustainable, with synergy built from the grassroots (village level) to ensure that the data obtained truly reflects the community's needs for tourism village development; (3) the ideal tourism village development program should be executed and evaluated collectively, with the expectation that the direction of development can be controlled jointly and that all parties can feel the benefits.



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The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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