

Sustainability Based on Synergy Between Competitive Advantage and Local Community Participation in A Developing Tourism Village in The Highlands of Central Java

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of competitive advantage and local community participation on the sustainability of tourism villages, with operational risk management as a moderating variable. This study focuses on developing tourism villages in the Central Java highlands, which have the highest MDPL (Sea Surface Area). The research method used a quantitative approach with a survey of 250 respondents, including managers and community members involved in tourism activities. The results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach indicate that competitive advantage has a positive and significant influence on tourism village sustainability ($\beta = 0.2527$, $t = 2.0528$, $p = 0.0406$). Similarly, local community participation also showed a positive and significant influence on tourism village sustainability ($\beta = 0.2477$, $t = 2.0620$, $p = 0.0396$). The most important finding is the moderating role of operational risk management, which significantly strengthens the relationship between competitive advantage and tourism village sustainability ($\beta = 0.3806$, $t = 2.4072$, $p = 0.0163$). This study concludes that the synergy between competitive advantage and community participation, supported by effective risk management, is crucial for achieving the sustainability of tourism villages in the highlands. The conclusion of this study is that the sustainability of tourism villages is highly dependent on the synergy between competitive advantage and community participation, effectively managed through the implementation of operational risk management. These results also provide practical implications for tourism village managers to prioritize these factors to maintain and enhance the long-term competitiveness of their destinations.

Keywords: *Competitive Advantage; Local Community Participation; Operational Risk Management; Tourism Village Sustainability; Highland Tourism Villages;*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the most important economic sectors globally, recognized as a key driver of sustainable development, job creation, and poverty alleviation (UNWTO, 2022). In Indonesia, tourism villages have emerged as the most effective model for community-based tourism development, integrating natural, cultural, and social potential to improve community well-being (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2023). This model aims to achieve sustainability, encompassing not only economic dimensions but also social and environmental ones (Tjiptono et al., 2021). The long-term success of tourism villages theoretically relies on two main foundations: competitive advantage that creates unique attractions (Porter, 2020) and local community participation that ensures social and cultural sustainability (Muryanti et al., 2023).

However, despite the importance of these two factors, several research gaps remain to be addressed. Phenomenally, tourism villages in the highlands of Central Java, which often have the highest MDPL (Asl), have shown rapid development. They have succeeded in attracting numerous tourists thanks to their natural beauty and unique cultural offerings. However, extreme geographic environments also make them vulnerable to various operational risks, ranging from natural disasters (such as landslides and eruptions) to unpredictable fluctuations in tourist numbers. It has been observed that some villages with strong competitive advantages and high community participation sometimes fail to maintain sustainability due to their inability to manage these risks (Pramono & Yulianti, 2021). This suggests that other variables play a crucial role in determining success amidst challenges.

Previous studies on the sustainability of tourism villages generally only analyzed the direct effects of competitive advantages and community participation (Prastowo & Sukmawati, 2021). These studies have not specifically integrated and tested how external variables, such as operational risk management, can influence the relationships between core variables. The lack of in-depth analysis of the role of risk management leaves a gap in our understanding of how tourism villages can build resilience in uncertain environments.

Theoretically, models of relationships between variables often assume only a direct effect. This approach is inadequate to explain situations where the relationship is not linear, but rather dependent on external factors. This study seeks to fill this theoretical gap by examining operational risk management as a moderating variable. This approach allows for analysis of how competitive advantage and community participation will have a stronger impact on sustainability when supported by an effective risk management system. Thus, this research is expected to enrich the theoretical framework of tourism sustainability with a more holistic model that is more relevant to conditions on the ground.

Based on these gaps, this research urgently needs to analyze in-depth the influence of competitive advantage and local community participation on the sustainability of tourist villages, with the moderating role of operational risk management. This study is expected to make significant contributions both theoretically and practically, particularly to the development of sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability of Tourism Villages

The concept of tourism sustainability is a paradigm developed to ensure that tourism not only provides economic benefits but also maintains environmental integrity and socio-cultural well-being. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2005) defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that fully takes into account its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts." In the context of tourism villages, sustainability can be measured through three main pillars (Tjiptono et al., 2021; Wahyuni et al., 2021):

- a. **Economic Sustainability:** Related to the destination's ability to generate equitable income for local communities and improve their standard of living in the long term. Indicators include increasing per capita income, business diversification, and job creation.
- b. **Socio-Cultural Sustainability:** Focuses on preserving traditions, cultural heritage, and community social values. This pillar ensures that interactions with tourists do not erode local identity, but rather enrich and strengthen it. Indicators include the level of community participation in decision-making and the preservation of customs.
- c. **Environmental Sustainability:** Concerning the protection and management of natural resources. This is crucial in highland areas vulnerable to environmental degradation, erosion, and natural disasters. Indicators include eco-friendly tourism practices, waste management, and ecosystem conservation.

Competitive Advantage

The theory of competitive advantage, popularized by Michael E. Porter (1985), states that an organization or entity, including tourism destinations, achieves long-term success by possessing unique attributes that are difficult for competitors to imitate. This advantage can stem from product uniqueness, service quality, or process innovation. In the context of rural tourism, competitive advantage can be formed from (Saputra et al., 2022; Porter, 2020):

- a. **Core Resources:** Includes natural resources (e.g., mountainous scenery), cultural heritage, and the uniqueness of the local community.
- b. **Complementary Advantages:** Consciously developed factors, such as service quality (hospitality, efficiency), facility development (comfortable homestays), and creative marketing strategies.

A strong competitive advantage acts as a magnet that attracts tourists and differentiates a village

from other destinations. Theoretically, the stronger the competitive advantage, the greater the potential for a tourism village to achieve economic sustainability.

Local Community Participation

Community participation is a fundamental concept in sustainable tourism development, particularly in community-based models. The classic Ladder of Participation theory by Sherry R. Arnstein (1969) describes levels of participation, from the lowest (manipulation) to the highest (full community control). In the context of tourism, Tosun (2000) adapted this concept into four specific dimensions:

- a. Participation in Planning: Community involvement from the outset in formulating the vision, mission, and development strategy.
- b. Participation in Implementation: Involvement in carrying out operational activities, such as serving as guides, lodging managers, or selling local products.
- c. Participation in Benefits: Involvement in obtaining equitable economic and social benefits.
- d. Participation in Responsibility: Involvement in shouldering the burdens and negative impacts of tourism, such as maintaining cleanliness and order.

Effective participation not only enhances social sustainability by empowering communities, but also strengthens economic and environmental sustainability through a sense of collective ownership of the destination.

Operational Risk Management

Operational risk management is the process of identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks that can hinder business operations (ISO 31000). In the context of tourism, particularly in highland tourist villages, operational risks are diverse and significant, including:

- a. Natural Disaster Risk: Erosion, landslides, or volcanic eruptions that can completely halt tourism activities (Pramono & Yulianti, 2021).
- b. Economic Risk: Fluctuations in visitor numbers, changing market trends, or economic recession.
- c. Social Risk: Inter-community conflict, security issues, or shifts in cultural values.
- d. Effective risk management not only mitigates the negative impacts of undesirable events but also creates stability and confidence for investors and tourists.

Relationships Between Variables and Hypothesis Formulation

- a. Direct Effect (H1 and H2): Previous research has shown a positive relationship between competitive advantage and local community participation with the sustainability of tourist villages. Villages with unique tourism products tend to be more sustainable, and active community participation is key to maintaining social sustainability. This hypothesis retests this fundamental causal relationship.
- b. The Moderating Role of Operational Risk Management (H3 and H4): This is the most unique and crucial part of this study. Theoretically, a moderating variable alters the strength of the relationship between two other variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this context, Operational Risk Management (MRO) not only directly influences sustainability but also strengthens the influence of competitive advantage and community participation.
 - 1) Competitive Advantage & MRO: A tourist village may have beautiful natural scenery (competitive advantage), but if it lacks a sound landslide mitigation system (risk management), this advantage will be irrelevant when a disaster strikes. Therefore, MRO moderates the relationship by ensuring that the advantage can be maintained amidst challenges.
 - 2) Community Participation & MRO: Community participation in daily activities will be more effective in promoting sustainability if they are also involved in the risk management process. Involvement in disaster mitigation planning, for example, will make their efforts more structured and effective in the long term.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

1. H1: Competitive Advantage has a positive and significant effect on the Sustainability of Tourism Villages.
2. H2: Local Community Participation has a positive and significant effect on the Sustainability of Tourism Villages.
3. H3: Operational Risk Management moderates (strengthens) the effect of Competitive Advantage on the Sustainability of Tourism Villages.
4. H4: Operational Risk Management moderates (strengthens) the effect of Local Community Participation on the Sustainability of Tourism Villages.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research methodology explains the approach, design, and procedures used to address the research objectives and hypotheses.

1. Research Approach and Type

This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. This quantitative approach was chosen to examine the causal relationships between variables and test the formulated hypotheses. A survey was conducted to collect data from respondents using a structured questionnaire. This research is descriptive-explanatory, meaning it not only explains the characteristics of each variable but also analyzes the causal relationships between these variables, namely the influence of competitive advantage and community participation on the sustainability of tourism villages, moderated by operational risk management.

2. Research Population and Sample

- a. Population: The population in this study is all individuals involved in tourism activities in tourism villages with the highest MDPL in Central Java. This population includes tourism village managers, business operators (MSMEs, homestays), and actively participating local communities.
- b. Sample: The research sample was drawn from this population. The sample size used was 250 respondents. This number is considered adequate and meets the minimum requirements for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis using SmartPLS (Hair et al., 2017).
- c. Sampling Technique: The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. This technique was chosen because respondents must meet certain criteria:
 - 1) Be at least 18 years old.
 - 2) Be managers, business owners, or community members actively involved in tourism activities in the highest MDPL tourist village in Central Java.
 - 3) Be willing to participate as respondents and complete the questionnaire in full.

3. Research Variables and Measurement

This research involves three types of variables:

a. Independent Variables (Exogenous):

- 1) Competitive Advantage (X1): Measured using indicators such as destination uniqueness, service quality, and tourism product innovation.
- 2) Local Community Participation (X2): Measured using Tosun's (2000) dimensions, namely participation in planning, implementation, profitability, and responsibility.

b. Dependent Variables (Endogenous):

- 1) Tourism Village Sustainability (Y): Measured using indicators from the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental.
- 2) Moderating Variables (Z):
Operational Risk Management (Z): Measured using indicators covering the identification, assessment, and mitigation of operational risks, particularly those related to highland locations.

The measurement scale used for all indicators is a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

4. Data Collection Techniques

Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed directly to respondents. The questionnaire was designed with questions that measure each indicator of the research variables. Before mass distribution, the questionnaire was pre-tested on 30 respondents outside the main sample to ensure its validity and reliability.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software. The rationale for using PLS-SEM is its ability to test models with complex moderating relationships and does not require strict data distribution assumptions.

Data analysis was divided into two main stages:

1) Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model):

- a. Validity Test: Assessing whether the indicators used are valid in measuring the variables. This is measured by Outer Loading (>0.708) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (>0.50).
- b. Reliability Test: Assessing the internal consistency of the instrument. This is measured using Composite Reliability (>0.70) and Cronbach's Alpha (>0.70).
- c. Discriminant Validity: Ensuring that each latent variable is distinct from other latent variables, as measured by the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (<0.90).

2) Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model):

- a. Causality Test (R-squared): Assesses the extent to which the independent variables can explain the dependent variable.
- b. Hypothesis Testing: Testing the research hypothesis by examining the path coefficient (beta value) and t-statistic through a bootstrapping procedure (p-value <0.05). This test will confirm the direct influence and moderating role of operational risk management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method. Testing was conducted in two stages: evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) to test validity and reliability, and evaluation of the structural model (inner model) to test the research hypotheses.

1. Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The results of the measurement model analysis indicate that all latent variables used (Competitive Advantage, Local Community Participation, Operational Risk Management, and Tourism Village Sustainability) met the required validity and reliability criteria. The measurement model evaluation was conducted to ensure that the research instruments (indicators) were valid and reliable in measuring the latent variables (constructs). The results of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability tests are presented in Table 1.

Konstruk	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Keunggulan Kompetitif	0.916	0.923	0.749
Partifipasi Masyarakat	0.942	0.949	0.824
Manajemen Risiko Operasional	0.911	0.921	0.745
Keberlanjutan Desa Wisata	0.942	0.948	0.822
Kriteria	>0.70	>0.70	>0.50

Based on Table 1, all Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are above 0.70, indicating good reliability for all constructs. Meanwhile, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs are also above 0.50, confirming that the research instrument has good convergent validity. These results indicate that all indicators accurately measure their constructs.

2. Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Structural model analysis was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships between latent variables. This test used the bootstrapping method with a significance level of $\alpha = 5\%$ (p-value < 0.05). The complete results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 2.

Jalur Hipotesis	Koefisien Jalur (β)	T-Statistics	P-Values	Keterangan
H1: Keunggulan Kompetitif -> Keberlanjutan	0.2527	2.0528	0.0406	Signifikan
H2: Partisipasi Masyarakat -> Keberlanjutan	0.2477	2.0620	0.0396	Signifikan
H3: MRO x Keunggulan Kompetitif -> Keberlanjutan	0.3806	2.4072	0.0163	Signifikan
H4: MRO x Partisipasi Masyarakat -> Keberlanjutan	0.0141	0.1668	0.8674	Tidak Signifikan

a. Direct Effect of Independent Variables on Tourism Village Sustainability The results of the hypothesis test show the following findings:

- 1) H1: Competitive Advantage has a positive and significant effect on Tourism Village Sustainability. This hypothesis is supported. The positive path coefficient of 0.2527 indicates that the higher the competitive advantage, the greater the level of sustainability of the tourism village. This result is statistically significant with a t-statistic of 2.0528 (P-value = 0.0406).
- 2) H2: Local Community Participation has a positive and significant effect on Tourism Village Sustainability. This hypothesis is also supported. The positive path coefficient of 0.2477 indicates that the higher the community participation, the greater the sustainability of the tourism village. This finding is statistically significant with a t-statistic of 2.0620 (P-value = 0.0396).
- 3) H3: Operational Risk Management moderates (strengthens) the effect of Competitive Advantage on Tourism Village Sustainability.

This hypothesis is supported. The positive interaction path coefficient of 0.3806 with a t-statistic of 2.4072 (P-value = 0.0163) proves that operational risk management significantly strengthens the relationship between competitive advantage and tourism village sustainability. This means that with good risk management, the influence of competitive advantage is strengthened.

- 4) H4: Operational Risk Management moderates (strengthens) the influence of Local Community Participation on Tourism Village Sustainability
- 5) This hypothesis is not supported. The interaction path coefficient of 0.0141 is not statistically significant (P-value = 0.8674). This means that operational risk management does not have a significant moderating role in strengthening or weakening the relationship between local community participation and tourism village sustainability.

In this research, the model and the results of this research can be seen in the model image below:

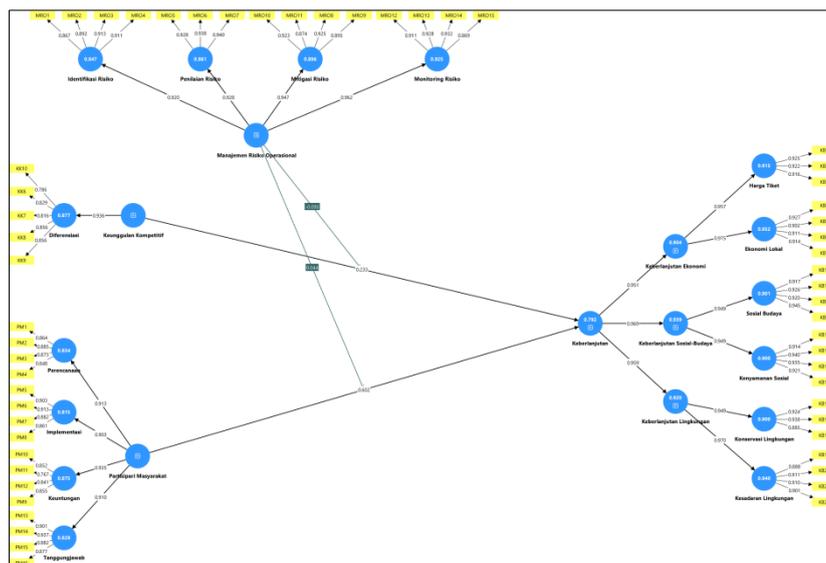


Figure 1. Model and Results of Data Processing of Variables X1, X2, Moderation and Y

The explanation of the measurement model analysis is as follows:

- a. Convergent Validity: All indicators have outer loadings above 0.70. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all variables are also above 0.50, indicating that the indicators robustly measure the constructs they are intended to measure.
- b. Discriminant Validity: Based on the Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criteria, all latent variables demonstrated good discriminant validity, meaning each variable clearly differs from the others.
- c. Concurrent Reliability: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables were above 0.70. This confirms that the research instrument has high internal consistency, ensuring the reliability of the collected data.

DISCUSSION

This village is known as a favorite destination for climbers due to its location on the Mount Prau hiking trail, which offers the best views of the sunrise and the Milky Way. The village's sustainability is strengthened by tree planting and safety training (rescue) for visitors (neliti.2023). The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy appreciates the solidarity of the community and the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) in developing the village, particularly in prioritizing tourist safety. Studies show that community participation is quite active, especially in implementing tourism village activities. However, challenges remain regarding the equitable distribution of economic benefits, as benefits are felt more by those directly involved (Bianca et al., 2021).

The analysis shows that competitive advantage (X1) has a positive and significant influence on the sustainability of tourism villages. This aligns with Michael E. Porter's (1985) theory of competitive advantage, which states that unique and difficult-to-imitate attributes are key to long-term success. Differentiation based on unique natural resources, culture, and product innovation has proven to be a key foundation in attracting and retaining tourist interest, ultimately supporting economic sustainability. This finding is also supported by previous research showing that differentiation is key to attracting and maintaining tourist interest.

Furthermore, local community participation (X2) was also shown to have a very strong positive and significant influence on the sustainability of tourist villages. This finding reinforces the theory of community-based development, where active community participation from the planning stage to implementation and benefit sharing creates a sense of collective ownership. This involvement is crucial for maintaining social and cultural sustainability and ensuring that the benefits of tourism are

equitably shared by the local community.

Tourist villages create a "collaborative synergistic space," where personal strengths (e.g., local skills) and communal strengths (e.g., natural beauty) are united and strengthened by the experiences of others. Through social interactions such as deliberation, community service, and the sharing of stories—a kind of "digital campfire" is created where communities share shared memories and spirits, fueled by tourism. This concept aligns with Cohen's (1979) theory in the study of existential tourism, where tourism is not only about the physical consumption of products but also a means of interpreting one's existence in a social and emotional context. In this space, the tourist village becomes a "gateway" to the world of the past and the future, where identity and social closeness are reconstructed.

The Influence of Competitive Advantage and Local Community Participation on Sustainability
The analysis shows that competitive advantage has a positive and significant influence on the sustainability of the tourist village ($\beta = 0.2527$, $p < 0.05$). This finding aligns with Michael E. Porter's (1985) theory of competitive advantage, which emphasizes the importance of unique and difficult-to-imitate attributes as the foundation for long-term success. In the context of this village, differentiation based on its unique location on the Mount Prau hiking trail and product innovation proved to be a major magnet for tourists. Efforts such as tree planting and safety (rescue) training also added unique value that was difficult for other destinations to replicate, thus supporting sustainability.

Similarly, local community participation was also shown to have a positive and significant influence on the sustainability of the tourist village ($\beta = 0.2477$, $p < 0.05$). These findings reinforce the theory of community-driven development, where active community involvement—from planning to implementation and benefit sharing—creates a sense of collective ownership. Studies show that cohesiveness between the community and the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) is key to successful village development. This participation not only ensures social and cultural sustainability but also ensures that the economic benefits of tourism are equitably shared by local communities, although challenges related to equitable distribution of benefits remain to be addressed (Bianca et al., 2021).

The Moderating Role of Operational Risk Management

The most important finding of this study is the moderating role of Operational Risk Management (MRO).

1. The Moderating Effect of MRO on Competitive Advantage:

The results show that MRO significantly moderates and strengthens the effect of competitive advantage on sustainability ($\beta = 0.3806$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that a tourism village's competitive advantage, even if already strong, will have a greater impact on sustainability if supported by an effective risk management system. In other words, a tourism village's ability to manage operational risks, such as natural disasters (landslides) or visitor safety incidents, is a determining factor in converting unique advantages into long-term sustainability.

2. The Moderating Effect of MRO on Community Participation:

Conversely, MRO did not have a significant moderating role in the relationship between local community participation and sustainability ($\beta = 0.0141$, $p > 0.05$). This finding is interesting and warrants further discussion. This insignificance may be because community participation already has a very strong and intrinsic influence on sustainability, so the moderating role of risk management is no longer dominant. Community participation may naturally encompass social and cultural risk mitigation (e.g., mutual cooperation and socialization), which falls outside the scope of formal operational risk management.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research makes an important contribution to the tourism literature. Theoretically, it enriches the sustainability model of tourism villages by adding MRO as a moderating variable, an aspect that has rarely been researched. Practically, these findings provide direct implications for

tourism village managers to prioritize MRO as an integral part of their development strategy.

The concept of tourism villages as "collaborative synergistic spaces" and the "digital campfires" mentioned above align with these findings. Social interactions within the village, such as deliberations, community service, and sharing stories, intrinsically strengthen community participation and also serve as informal mechanisms for risk management. This is what enables tourism villages to maintain their sustainability, namely through the synergy between competitive advantage, strong community participation, and effective risk management, both formally and informally.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of competitive advantage and local community participation on the sustainability of tourist villages, with operational risk management as a moderating variable. Using a quantitative approach with a sample of 250 respondents, this study successfully confirmed several crucial findings.

The analysis results indicate that competitive advantage and local community participation significantly and positively influence the sustainability of tourist villages. This finding strengthens the theoretical foundation that unique differentiation and active community involvement are key foundations for the success of tourism destinations.

The most important contribution of this study lies in examining the moderating role of operational risk management (MRO). This study found that MRO significantly strengthens the influence of competitive advantage on sustainability. This means that amid unavoidable challenges such as market fluctuations or environmental risks, tourist villages with unique advantages will be able to achieve higher sustainability if supported by effective risk mitigation strategies. Conversely, the moderating role of MRO on the relationship between community participation and sustainability was not found to be significant, suggesting that community participation may already have a strong intrinsic impact, or that MRO interacts differently with the social aspects of tourism.

Theoretically, this study contributes by expanding the sustainability model of tourist villages by integrating risk management, an aspect that has rarely been researched. Practically, these results provide important implications for tourism village stakeholders, including focusing not only on community promotion and engagement but also on establishing a structured risk management system.

Future research is recommended to explore the role of other variables that may influence this relationship, such as climate change adaptability or digital innovation. Furthermore, qualitative research can be conducted to more deeply understand how communities informally manage risks and challenges in tourism village development.

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