

The Role of Homestays in Shaping the Identity of Tourism Villages: A Case Study in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village

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<p>ARTICLE HISTORY Accepted: 25 Desember 2023 Revised: 29 April 2024 Approved: 30 April 2024 Published: 30 April 2024</p> <p>*Corresponding ariesfarhan@upi.edu</p> <p> 10.22219/satwika.v8i1.31329  jurnalsatwika@umm.ac.id</p> <p>How to Cite: Farhan, A., Malihah, E., & Andari, R. (2024). The Role of Homestays in Shaping the Identity of Tourism Villages: A Case Study in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village. <i>Satwika: Kajian Ilmu Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial</i>, 8(1), 146-154. https://doi.org/10/22210/satwika.v8i1.31329</p> 	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>Tourism villages can be an alternative in the development of Community Based Tourism (CBT). CBT development in tourist villages is influenced by various aspects, one of which is homestay accommodation. However, there is still limited research related to the identity of tourist villages, especially in the context of homestays. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role played by homestays as a tourist village identity, with a focus on Mekarlaksana Tourism Village. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach, involving a case study in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village. Data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews with Pokdarwsi (Tourism Awareness Group) and homestay managers. In this study determined 10 resource persons with the criteria of people who were born, lived and made a living in the village. The findings of this study reveal that the identity of a tourist village and the role of homestays are key elements in the context of rural tourism. Tourism villages emphasize uniqueness, sustainability, and local wisdom, which include cultural attractions, nature, history, accommodation, and traditions that distinguish the village from other places. The role of homestays in developing the identity of a tourist village has proven to be very important. The findings of this study provide an understanding to tourism village managers that the presence of homestays can attract tourists to visit.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Tourism Village; Identity; Homestays; CBT</i></p> <p>ABSTRAK</p> <p>Desa wisata dapat menjadi salah satu alternatif dalam pengembangan Community Based Tourism (CBT). Pengembangan CBT di desa wisata dipengaruhi oleh berbagai aspek, salah satunya adalah akomodasi homestay. Namun, masih terbatasnya penelitian terkait identitas desa wisata khususnya dalam konteks homestay. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran yang dimainkan oleh homestay sebagai identitas desa wisata, dengan fokus pada Desa Wisata Mekarlaksana. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan mengambil studi kasus di Desa Wisata Mekarlaksana. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara mendalam dengan Pokdarwsi (Kelompok Sadar Wisata) dan pengelola homestay. Temuan dari penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa identitas desa wisata dan peran homestay merupakan elemen kunci dalam konteks pariwisata pedesaan. Desa wisata menekankan pada keunikan, keberlanjutan, dan kearifan lokal, yang meliputi atraksi budaya, alam, sejarah, akomodasi, dan tradisi yang membedakan desa tersebut dengan tempat lain. Peran homestay dalam mengembangkan identitas desa wisata terbukti sangat penting. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman kepada pengelola desa wisata bahwa keberadaan homestay dapat menarik wisatawan untuk berkunjung.</p> <p>Kata kunci: <i>Desa Wisata; Identitas; Homestay; CBT</i></p>
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INTRODUCTION

Community-based tourism (CBT) has always been considered a viable alternative approach to drive economic growth, particularly in developing countries ([Pratama et al., 2021](#); [Ismarizal et al., 2023](#); [Lee & Jan, 2019](#)). CBT has a positive impact on the local economy by opening up business and employment opportunities. According to [Zielinski et al., \(2020\)](#) emphasized that CBT can overcome poverty problems for local communities. through the active participation of local communities in management village tourism. Village tourism promotes local economic sustainability and strengthens cultural identity ([Judith et al., 2012](#); [O'Sullivan & Jackson, 2002](#); [Andari & Beni, 2023](#); [Whiteside et al., 2020](#)). Thus, the concept of village tourism is not only a means to increase tourism, but also an effective model in promoting community welfare.

In developing a tourist village, it is crucial to consider several important components to ensure a satisfactory tourist experience. According to [Kachniewska \(2006\)](#), specific products play a significant role as components of the overall tourist experience and can be offered individually, including accommodation, transportation, attractions, and other facilities for tourists. Among these components, accommodation holds particular importance as it directly contributes to ensuring tourists' comfort. One form of accommodation that can be considered is a homestay, which provides tourists with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture and experience a more authentic stay. By offering homestays, tourist villages can enhance the overall experience for visitors, making them feel welcomed and providing them with a unique and memorable experience.

Homestays play an important role in developing the identity of tourist villages and creating an engaging experience for tourists. Homestays provide a place for villagers to preserve local culture, customs, and community norms that can be enjoyed by tourists ([Takaendengan et al., 2022](#)). Villages that choose to adopt homestays as part of their identity are often able to provide a more in-depth perspective on local life and traditional wisdom ([Rasid et al., 2011](#)). With homestays, tourists can directly engage in village life, learn about local traditions and customs, and contribute to the local community's economy. Homestays also

serve as a bridge between tourists and locals, facilitating cultural exchanges and valuable experiences. In addition, homestays support the sustainable development of tourist villages by raising awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage and the natural environment. As such, homestays play an important role in developing the identity of tourist villages, creating unique experiences for tourists, and promoting the well-being of local communities.

Homestays play a crucial role in empowering local communities as hosts and supporting their livelihoods ([Balasingam et al., 2019](#)). By offering economic opportunities, homestays enable community members to improve their economic conditions. However, their significance goes beyond mere financial benefits. Homestays also serve as the identity of a village, providing an avenue for local communities to showcase their environmentally friendly practices and conservation values to tourists ([Kongpet et al., 2022](#)). Through these interactions, tourists gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the social, economic, natural, and cultural aspects of the community's life. Furthermore, homestays contribute to fostering strong relationships between locals and tourists, enhancing cultural exchange and promoting mutual understanding ([Acharya & Halpenny, 2013](#)). In summary, homestays are not only a means of economic support but also serve as important agents in supporting the well-being of local communities and facilitating sustainable tourism practices.

Increased demand for homestays in local communities can open opportunities for local skills development and training. Homestays can encourage community participation in the development and preservation of tourism villages ([Lee & Jan, 2019](#)). Active community participation can provide opportunities for communities to share cultural heritage and traditional skills. As hosts, local communities can also be empowered in the decision-making process related to tourism development. Thus, maintaining a balance between tourism growth and preservation of local identity. However, not much research has been done regarding local identity through homestays

Research related to homestays has been carried out. [Mura \(2015\)](#) research examined tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of the homestay experience in Malaysia. Then research by [Qiao et al \(2021\)](#) tested the impact of internal features and

external environmental attributes on room prices using geographically weighted regression (GWR) in high-end rural homestays in China. Furthermore, research by [Jiang et al \(2022\)](#) on positive memories from homestay guests can increase repurchase intentions, satisfaction, and word of mouth while contributing to the sustainable development of the homestay industry. However, there is still a research gap that explores how Homestays can become the Identity of Tourist Villages.

This research is important to carry out in order to provide understanding to tourist village managers that the existence of a homestay is the identity of a tourist village so that it can attract tourists to visit. Therefore, this research aims to explore the role of homestays as the identity of tourist villages, with a focus on Mekarlaksana Tourism Village. This research emphasizes the importance of homestays in attracting tourists to visit tourist villages. The findings of this research have important implications for tourism village managers, because they gain a better understanding of the identity of tourist villages through homestays.

METHOD

This research aims to explore the role of homestays as the identity of a tourist village, with a focus on the Mekarlaksana Tourist Village. village map as in [figure 1](#). The best approach that allows the author to produce a detailed and in-depth overview is by using qualitative methods ([Flick, 1998](#)). According to [Sugiyono \(2016\)](#), qualitative research methods are based on postpositivist philosophy and are used for research that focuses on the natural conditions of the object. This study focuses on discussing the homestays that serve as the identity of the Mekarlaksana Tourist Village. The research location is situated in Mekarlaksana Village, Cikanjung District, Bandung Regency, West Java Province.



Figure 1. Map of Mekarlaksana Village
(Source: Pokdarwis Mekarlaksana Village)

In this study, informants were selected using purposive sampling method, where the researcher intentionally selected them with the belief that they have knowledge about the issues under study, thus providing in-depth answers regarding the central issues ([Patton et al., 1992](#)). In this study determined 10 resource persons with the criteria of people who were born, lived and made a living in the village. Data for this study was collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted with representatives from Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group), homestay managers, and tourists who had visited Mekarlaksana Tourism Village as in [table 1](#). By using this method, the researcher hopes to gain a comprehensive insight into the issues being researched.

Table 1: Research Sources

No	Sources	Question
1	Pokdarwis	Identity Perspective
2	Homestay Manager	Homestay Condition
3	Tourist	Experience in Homestay

In November through December 2023, interviews were conducted that lasted between 30-60 minutes each time ([Jacob & Furgerson, 2015](#)). Qualitative descriptive analysis techniques were used to achieve the research objectives. Data validity was verified through data source triangulation, by comparing interview results with findings from field observations and literature studies. This method ensured the validity of the data used in the study. Interviews conducted during the period provided the relevant time frame and context for obtaining the necessary information. By combining data triangulation and qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, the research was able to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research explores how informants stated that homestays are one of the characteristics of a tourism village that attracts tourists to visit Mekarlaksana Village. However, the study of homestays in this context is still not comprehensive. Therefore, in-depth research is needed to understand how homestays can more deeply become an identity attached to a Tourism Village, especially Mekarlaksana Village.

Site Overview

Mekarlaksana Tourism Village is located in Cikanjung District, within the Bandung Regency of West Java Province, Indonesia. What makes this village unique is its direct border with Garut Regency. Situated at altitudes ranging from 1,200 to 1,500 meters above sea level, Mekarlaksana Tourist Village boasts breathtaking views of the surrounding landscapes. It takes approximately 2 hours to reach the village from the center of Bandung City.



Figure 2. view of mekarlaksana village
Source: Mekarlaksana village website

From [figure 2](#) there is a view or local picture of the village of mekarlaksana. The village has great potential from its nature, culture and people. Because Mekarlaksana Village has a very high altitude.

The Mekarlaksana Tourism Village is surrounded by a rich variety of flora, including coffee plants, tobacco, and pine forests, which contribute to the village's natural beauty. The village is also home to diverse fauna such as cows, goats, and various species of birds, further enhancing its biodiversity. Additionally, the village's forests are inhabited by a wide range of wild animals, forming an integral part of its natural ecosystem. Not only does Mekarlaksana Village serve as an interesting tourist destination, but it also showcases captivating biodiversity that fascinates visitors.

Geographically, Mekarlaksana Village shares borders with several neighboring areas. To the west, it is bordered by Cililuk Village in the Cikancung District, Bandung Regency. To the east, it is adjacent to Rancasalak Village and Jangkurang Village in the Leles District, Garut Regency. To the north, it borders

Cihanyir Village and Cikancung Village in the Cikancung Subdistrict, Bandung Regency. Finally, to the south, it is connected to Srirahayu Village in the Cikancung Subdistrict, as well as Drawati Village in the Paseh Subdistrict, both in Bandung Regency.

Mekarlaksana Village is divided into several areas, including four hamlets, nine neighborhood associations (RW), and 34 neighborhood associations (RT). Each part of Mekarlaksana Village possesses its own unique characteristics, enriched by the enchanting hills that grace its landscape. The table below provides the population statistics for Mekarlaksana Village.

In 2020, Mekarlaksana Tourism Village began efforts to empower its community to develop into a tourist village. Tourism has the potential to empower communities and the sustainable tourism agenda ([Cole, 2006](#)). During this period, some communities still had a lack of understanding or awareness of the concept of a tourist village. Nonetheless, the village government and Pokdarwis groups worked hard to improve the community's understanding of the potential of a tourist village. We have tried to empower Pokdarwis in all village matters, such as the creation of Tour Guides and the creation of tour packages ([Pratama et al., 2021](#)). Mekarlaksana Tourism Village was officially designated as a tourism village on December 22, 2022. Although it has obtained official status, at present, Mekarlaksana Tourism Village is still categorized as a pioneering tourism village.

...The village government and Pokdarwis groups are working hard to improve the community's understanding of the potential of the tourism village. (in-depth interview)

In the process of developing a tourist village, it is important to implement development equitably so that the community can feel the impact in a real way. The findings from this study confirm the argument put forward by [Rickly-Boyd \(2012\)](#) that pioneer tourist communities contribute through village development, including aspects of the village landscape, creating an active atmosphere, and building their own imagination, as described by [Putri & Fadiarman \(2023\)](#) such development includes infrastructure, economy, and human resource enhancement as key elements in starting and developing a tourism village. By implementing equitable and comprehensive development, village communities can feel the real benefits of sustainable tourism village development.

Number of Homestay

Mekarlaksana Village, located in a picturesque setting, offers a unique opportunity for tourists to experience the local culture through homestay accommodations. Furthermore, Mekarlaksana Village is committed to promoting sustainable tourism practices. The homestay program not only provides economic opportunities for the local community but also encourages cultural preservation and environmental conservation. By choosing to stay in a homestay, visitors contribute directly to the well-being of the village and its residents. With its abundant homestay options, scenic surroundings, and commitment to sustainable tourism, Mekarlaksana Village invites tourists to delve into an authentic cultural experience, immersing themselves in the warmth and hospitality of the local community.



Figure 3. Source: Mekarlaksana village website

Figure 3 shows the shape of the homestay in Mekarlaksana Village. Homestays have complete facilities, beautiful views and are safe. Mekarlaksana Village provides homestays from the community for tourists to stay, from different locations. The following is data on the number of homestays in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village.

Table 2. Number of Homestays in Mekarlaksana Village (Source: Mekarlaksana Village Pokdarwis Data Year 2023)

No	Name of Homestay Owner	Total Tourist Capacity
1	Ibu Nenden	10 people
2	Ibu Tati	30 people
3	Bapak Wahyu	5 people
4	Bapak Cecep Sasa	8 people
5	Ibu Imas Anpas	30 people
6	Bapak Kusnadi	7 people
7	Ibu Rini	20 people
8	Ibu Yuli	8 people
9	Ibu Agun	7 people
10	Ibu Acih	5 people

11	Ibu Aah	20 people
12	Ibu Engkom	25 people
13	Ibu Nyonjoh	16 people
14	RW	8 people
15	Ibu Irma	7 people
16	Bapak Aan	15 people
17	Bapak Hardian	15 people
18	Bapak Gugun	15 people
19	Bapak Gugun	10 people
20	Bapak Gugun	10 people
Total		271 people

From the table 2, it can be seen that the number of homestays is 20 homestay houses. With different ownership and different capacities. The total capacity that can accommodate tourists is 271 people when the number of tourists is on the rise. Usually the number of tourists rises at the end of the year. Homestay facilities in Mekarlaksan Village are generally the same, such as toilets, living rooms, kitchen spaces and different numbers of rooms.

...The capacity of each homestay is different from one another. Each homestay has a different capacity to accommodate the number of guests and usually the number of guests increases at the end of the year. (in-depth interview)

As mentioned by research Kim et al (2021) that guests usually experience a significant increase at the end of the year. This is due to several factors, such as year-end holidays, Christmas and New Year celebrations, and the school vacation season. Many people take this opportunity to go on vacation or gather with their family and friends. In addition, the end of the year also often brings about various events and celebrations that attract many people. All of these factors have a positive impact on the local community, so the number of guests staying or visiting a place usually increases at the end of the year.

Identity of Tourism Village (Homestay)

A tourist village has a number of important aspects that must be considered in order to be recognized as a tourist village. Some of these aspects involve natural and cultural attractions, accessibility, amenity, and supporting institutions (Haukeland et al., 2010). In Mekarlaksana Tourism Village, natural attractions involve elements such as camping ground, pine forest,

coffee plantation, tobacco plantation, and waterfall. Cultural attractions include pencak silat, ngegogo, hajat lembur, and kuda lumping performances. Various attractions in the form of performing arts, regional handicrafts, historic buildings or museums as well as habits or traditions in the community of cultural tourism destinations can be enjoyed by tourists ([Asriwandari et al., 2023](#)). Furthermore, road access to the village is still under renovation or repair. There needs to be adequate support for facilities and infrastructure, including more efficient roads and adequate and representative [transportation](#) ([Asriwandari et al., 2023](#)). Amenities available in Mekarlaksana Tourism Village involve places such as coffee cafés, mosques, stalls, and accommodation in the form of homestays. Institutionally, the village is supported by the village government, Pokdarwis (Tourism Foundation), and farmer groups.

...Mekarlaksana Tourism Village has natural attractions such as camping ground, pine forest, coffee plantation, tobacco plantation and waterfall. Meanwhile, cultural attractions include pencak silat performances, ngegogo, hajat lembur, and kuda lumping. (in-depth interview)

This is in line with research by [Cheng et al \(2010\)](#) which states that the four main dimensions that contribute to the overall attractiveness of forest recreation areas, including tourist attractions, accessibility, complementary facilities, and services. Then [Izza et al \(2022\)](#) explained that to achieve progress and success in every aspect of people's lives, be it in the economic, social, and cultural fields, improving the quality of human resources requires greater investment in education, training, potential development, and increasing individual competence. In addition, research by [Meitasari \(2023\)](#) explains that there are several indicators of tourism potential, namely attractions, service facilities, and infrastructure that already support.

Homestays play a very important role in the development of a tourist village's identity. Homestays not only create authentic and engaging experiences for tourists, but also serve as a platform for the preservation of local culture, customs and community norms ([Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015](#)). Villages that adopt homestays can often provide an in-depth

perspective on local life and traditional wisdom, and facilitate cultural exchange between tourists and locals. In addition, homestays also contribute to local economic development ([Acharya & Halpenny, 2013](#)), by empowering villagers as hosts, creating jobs, and introducing eco-friendly practices to tourists.

...Guests can learn and experience first-hand the cultural practices and traditions of our villagers. This maintains and strengthens the cultural identity of the tourist village and encourages the maintenance of local heritage in our village. (in-depth interview)

The development of education-based tourism related to research conducted by [Ibrahim & Adiputra \(2023\)](#) shows a good increase and can provide direct and indirect benefits for tourists and local communities. Furthermore, education-based tourism is also able to change the views of local communities and tourists towards nature conservation efforts. By engaging tourists in educational activities related to nature and its sustainability, education-based tourism can provide memorable and rewarding travel experiences for tourists. In addition, through participation in education-based tourism, local communities can also improve their understanding of the importance of nature conservation and play an active role in environmental conservation efforts.

Of all the aspects that have been mentioned, Mekarlaksana Tourism Village emphasizes in particular on amenity, especially in the form of homestay accommodation. In 2022, the village won an award as the best homestay category tourist village in the 2022 Cultural Tourism and Creative Economy Award. The Regent emphasized the importance of this award event as a means of empowerment for cultural, tourism and creative arts actors in Bandung Regency. The event is also considered a forum for promotion, education, and collaboration to support the vision of Bandung Regency which aims to be Economically Sound, Digital, Religious, and Prosperous (BEDAS). In addition to Mekarlaksana Village in the homestay category, awards were also given to Tarumajaya Village as the Best Pioneer 2022, Cibiru Wetan Village as a Digital Village, Cilame Village in the culture category, Panundaan Village in the ecraft category, and Sugihmukti Village in the Tour Package category.

Here's a picture of the award trophy in the homestay category.

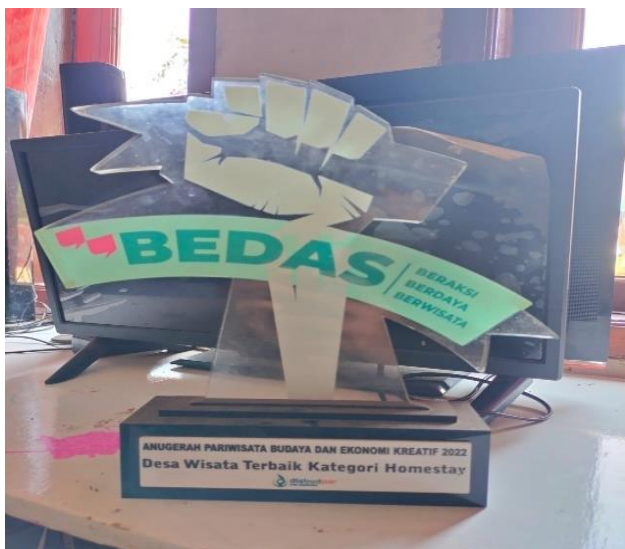


Figure 4. Photo of Homestay Category Award (Source: Research Documentation 2023)

Homestays have become the identifying characteristic of Mekarlaksana Tourism Village, accompanied by various achievements. As seen in [figure 4](#) However, improvements in homestay management are needed in the future to ensure guest satisfaction ([Ly et al., 2021](#)), so that they feel attracted to return. This effort is a strategic step in maintaining and enhancing the reputation and attractiveness of Mekarlaksana Tourism Village as a friendly and attractive destination for visitors.

CONCLUSION

Homestays play a pivotal role in the development of a tourism village's identity. Homestays create authentic and engaging experiences for tourists, while serving as a platform for the preservation of local culture, customs, and community norms. In addition, homestays also contribute to local economic development by empowering village communities as hosts, creating jobs, and introducing eco-friendly practices to tourists. In this sense, homestays not only create an emotional bond between travelers and the village, but also positively impact the social, economic, natural, and cultural life of the village. Homestays are not just a place to stay, but also a strong foundation in building and maintaining a tourist village identity that supports village growth and sustainability through economic development, the environment, and the tourist experience.

Overall, this research emphasizes the significance of homestays in attracting tourists to visit tourism villages. The findings of this study have important implications for tourism village managers, as they gain a better understanding of the positive influence that homestays can have on tourist numbers. However, there are still opportunities for future research to delve deeper into this topic. Specifically, further studies can explore additional factors that contribute to the success of homestays in attracting tourists and examine the specific preferences and motivations of tourists who choose to stay in homestays. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate how tourism village managers can effectively promote and market their homestays to maximize their potential in attracting visitors. By addressing these areas, future research can provide more comprehensive insights and recommendations to enhance the role of homestays in tourism village development.

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