

The Role of Local Champion in Achieving an Integrated Rural Tourism: A Case Study of Alamendah Tourism Village, West Java

Peran Local Champion dalam Mewujudkan Pariwisata Pedesaan Terpadu: Studi Kasus Desa Wisata Alamendah Jawa Barat

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ABSTRACT

Integrated rural tourism can provide welfare to the community and materialize the concept of sustainable tourism. The development carried out to achieve this requires synergy between the internal and external stakeholders. This study analyzes the role of local champions in achieving integrated rural tourism. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore cases or phenomena that are interrelated to determine their uniqueness. The tourist village explored is Alamendah which has an ADWI (Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia) award 2021 from the government, the selection of this tourist village can be a guide for other tourist villages with a desire to grow. According to the findings of this study, the role of the chairman of the village, who is responsible for managing tourism in the village and acts as a local champion in establishing integrated rural tourism, is essential. Tourist villages also require leaders from their communities who can be trusted and influential in uniting their goals and mission.

Keywords: local champion, integrated rural tourism, villages



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INTRODUCTION

Development of tourism activity requires the principles of sustainable tourism, including the value of advantages for economic, environmental, and social objectives (Johnston, 2015). Creative tourism attractions based on the environment and culture may be developed to attract tourists to conduct tourism activities while protecting local knowledge values. The transformation of a village into a tourism attraction is seen to provide additional value to the hamlet, with the advantages felt directly by the local people, especially tourism products that will be processed continuously and sustainably to provide added value. Previously, tourists were able to engage in the purchase of plantations and livestock products; now, tourists can engage in the carry out of plantations and livestock. The process and conditioning required to build a tourism-aware community are required so that the key values included in *Sapta Pesona* conditions, which consist of seven elements: safe, organized, clean, refreshing, attractive, welcoming, and memorable that may be understood and realized. The tourism village strategy for economic growth has been shown to be an appropriate step in accordance with the ideals of sustainable development articulated in numerous studies (Zakaria & Suprihardjo, 2014). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, contemporary tourism trends have shifted from mass tourism to alternative tourism, in which tourist activities are not carried out in huge numbers but stress the features of natural, environmental, and cultural preservation (Fragkou, 2021; Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017; Vainikka, 2016). The emergence of tourist villages is an alternative solution to the problem of developing and accelerating national economic recovery because it prioritizes the utilization of natural potential while adhering to aspects of sustainability in the implementation of its activities, including social, cultural, and environmental aspects (Masitah, 2019).

The premise of building a tourist village is that it must be an alternative tourism product that stimulates rural development while adhering to the principles of sustainable management (Kartika et al., 2019): (1) performing use of existing community infrastructure and facilities; (2) benefit the community as a whole; (3) small-scale in order to allow and enhance community reciprocity; (4) include members of the local community in all activities; and (5) place rural tourism product development into action.

Several scholars have researched and incorporated the notion of integrated rural tourism in the literature, although there is no widely acknowledged conceptualization (Marzo-Navarro et al., 2017). Rural development, geography, sociology, ecology, cultural economics, community studies, and sustainable tourism are all components of integrated rural tourism (Marzo-Navarro et al., 2020). The primary goal of integrated rural tourism is to comprehend the complex nature of rural tourism (environment, economics, and society) as well as the role of local tourist stakeholders, while also supporting the integration of the environment, economy, society, and culture in the tourism sector (Ho & Lee, 2020). The concept of “integrated” rural tourism development refers to how to build an overview of the overall development results of the tourism industry in the region, which includes environmental, social, cultural, and economic aspects (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). If the formulated elements can be integrated well, more value will be created. The essence of integrated development is the comprehensive unification of space, labor, institutions, creativity, economy, society, nature, time, and community, which requires diverse considerations (Saxena et al., 2007).

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy/Tourism and Creative Economy Agency (*Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif / Badan Pariwisata Ekonomi Kreatif*) held the 2021 *Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia* (ADWI) event (Is-Nurwanda, 2022). ADWI is an awarding event for tourist villages that have achievements with established assessment criteria which are expected to drive economic recovery, especially in the tourism and creative economy sectors. Apart from beautiful natural scenery, tourist villages can also rely on creative and cultural economic products. During the ADWI event, Alamendah Tourism Village, located in Rancabali District, Bandung Regency, West Java Province won 2nd place in the digital village category (Risda et al., 2023). The potential attraction for tourists in Alamendah Tourism Village is nature, specifically Kawah Putih and Ranca Upas natural attractions, dairy farming, vegetable and fruit farming agro-tourism, Arboretum Park Alamendah, educational tourism in the form of coffee exploration, and bird watching. In addition, there is a creative economy center that creates things produced by the Alamendah community as souvenirs for tourists.. A village ought to keep carrying on its role as an inspiration for environmental and cultural conservation as well as to preserve the balance of life and ecosystems. The village can provide a location from which to learn many things, particularly regarding environmental and cultural conservation, through tourist activities (Nugroho et al. 2018).

However, despite the many awards obtained by Alamendah Tourism Village, in the implementation of its management, the community has not been able to synergize providers or tourism providers in the administrative area of Alamendah Village in an integrated manner. Many of them still run their activities individually, especially in the food, beverage, and accommodation service businesses. Each moves individually and only for personal gain, and is less involved in community participation. This is less oriented towards sustainability based on economic, social, and environmental values. Community participation and contribution are very important because they can maintain long-term value, where the local community is very likely to provide the best work for the region, both in terms of products and services in tourism activities. Local communities in Alamendah have conducted tourism activities that provide economic benefits; however, there is no guarantee that these tourism activities will be executed sustainably. Saxena et al. (2007) stated, integrated rural tourism is required to ensure that maintenance is continued in tourist villages. The lack of community involvement and the weak ability of tourism village institutions to synergize stakeholders can potentially lead to unhealthy competition and conflict in the local community. These conditions can be overcome by the role of local champions who influence tourist villages (Simanjuntak & Sariffuddin, 2017).

Understanding the context of a local champion can be understood by those who can influence policies, opinions, or actions in a society because of their role and position in society (Kayat et al., 2016). In this context, local champions play an important role in facilitating the development of tourism villages and achieving sustainable success (Xu et al., 2017). The role of local champions in the development of tourism villages is key to realizing the vision and potential of a destination. Local champions, who can be individuals or groups, have a high commitment and enthusiasm for the development of tourism villages. As described by Murphy (1985), local champions have in-depth knowledge of the local potential and leadership skills needed to drive development initiatives (Halim, Amin, & Muda 2016). There are four characteristics of a local champion: visioning, affiliating, altruistic, and autonomous (Saufi, 2022).

Communication is also a crucial aspect of the role of the local champion (Tranggono et al., 2021). They act as spokespersons for tourism villages, articulating the community's goals, aspirations, and needs to the government, businesses, and other groups. Their ability to lead discussions, build consensus, and maintain the flow of information is crucial for ensuring that community interests are heard and heeded. Local champions have three main roles: mediators, mobilizers, and facilitators (Yuwono et al., 2022). Local champions act as liaisons between communities, the government, and other stakeholders. Their role is to facilitate dialog, negotiation, and collaboration, which enables understanding, participatory planning, and conflict resolution (Simanjuntak & Sariffuddin, 2017). Local champions have the ability to mobilize local communities and move them to actively participate in the development of tourism villages. They encourage community participation in tourism activities; involve youth, women, and marginalized groups; and build community capacity in tourism. Local champions act as facilitators in policy implementation, resource management, and tourism infrastructure development. They assist in project financing, organizing events, and facilitating cooperation with external partners, such as educational institutions, private companies, and NGOs.

The head of the Tourism Awareness Group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata*) of Alamendah Tourism Village informed that the current Tourism Awareness Group has involved several residents to jointly manage the village according to their expertise, such as management in the fields of IT, social media, security, public relations, micro/small/medium/enterprises (MSMEs), and tourism. Residents have begun to realize the impact of tourism on their villages and offer land to support tourism activities. The tourism potentials found in various RW are utilized by Pokdarwis in arranging tour packages such as outbound, camping, and fun games. Although many people are involved in the management of the tourism village, it is still not optimal because the knowledge of the management is still limited and there is still a lack of access to synergize with other tourism stakeholders, lack of opportunities and internal problems to collaborate and integrate resources are also a challenge for Alamendah Tourism Village. An integrated development system is required to ensure that the potential and operations are executed properly.

Prafitri & Damayanti (2016) found that the disadvantage of a tourist village is that it fails to recognize all of its tourism resources, as well as other potential support sources, such as the local community and government. This is unfortunate because integrated rural tourism has the opportunity to expand and grow villages. A previous study also highlighted that integrated rural tourism is an innovative concept to be used in tourist villages because it can maintain a balance between economic resources, cultural heritage rehabilitation, and environmental sensitivity (Chevalier, 2018). However, to implement the

integrated rural tourism method, an appropriate manager that can be trusted as a local champion in the tourist village is required. Based on this background, research on local champions to achieve integrated rural tourism is necessary to maximize the integration of tourism villages in order to actualize as a sustainable ecotourism-based tourism village.

METHODS

The research was conducted in Bandung Regency, the Alamendah tourism village area, focusing on the role of local champion in realizing integrated rural tourism that can actualize sustainable ecotourism-based tourism villages. This research was conducted for eight months, starting in March 2023 until November 2023 using a qualitative approach. The research strategy used is a case study which is part of qualitative research involving various sources of information. Creswell & Creswell (2018) defines a case study as an exploration of bounded systems or cases. Case studies include a full description of the location or individuals, followed by data analysis for themes or issues.

Miles et al., (2014) stated activities in qualitative data analysis are participatory and ongoing until completion, resulting in data saturation. Data analysis activities include the following:

1. Data reduction, this process selects the main things, focuses on important things, looks for themes and patterns. Thus the data that has been reduced will provide a clearer picture, and make it easier for researchers to carry out further data collection, and search for it when needed.
2. Data display, data presentation can be done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between flowchart categories and the most commonly used to present data in qualitative research is narrative text.
3. Conclusion Drawing or Data Verification, Conclusion is the last step in the process of data analysis, drawing conclusions is done by finding the meaning of the data that has been presented. After the data is collected, then conclusions are drawn and then the conclusions are verified and tested for validity (observation, interview and accredited journals).

This research uses an in-depth case study (intrinsic case study) conducted on a case with high distinctiveness and uniqueness. The focus of this research is on the case itself, either as a location, program, event or activity. In-depth case study research consists of study that is very tied to its context, or in other words, very tied to its focus (sitecase). The case studied is the development of Alamendah Tourism Village to become an integrated tourism village by making the role of local champion as the main driver, where the results of this study will explain or describe the explanation behind the phenomena that occur. Field observations and interviews with resources were used to conduct the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Alamendah Tourism Village

Alamendah Village is one of the 5 villages located in Rancabali Sub-district, Bandung Regency, West Java with an area of approximately 505.6 ha. The village is located at an altitude of 1,200–1,550 m above sea level, with an average temperature of 19–20 °C and rainfall of 2,150 mm/year. The administrative areas directly adjacent to Alamendah Village are as follows; North: Panundaan village, Ciwidey sub-district; East: Sugih Mukti village, Pasir Jambu sub-district; South: Patenggang Village, Rancabali Sub-district; West: Lebakmuncang village, Ciwidey sub-district (Figure 1).

Alamendah Tourism Village cooperates with the Bandung Regency Culture and Tourism Office as a coach. The Village head advisor is H. Awan Rukmawan who bridges the government with the Head of the Tourism Village Wendiansyah. Furthermore, the Head of the Tourism Village is assisted by a deputy, secretary, treasurer, and divisions needed, such as security, cleanliness, tourist attractions, business development, and public relations. The following is the organizational structure of the Alamendah Tourism Village (Figure 2).

In terms of governance, Alamendah Village was originally part of the Ciwidey Village government, Ciwidey Sub-district, but since 1978 Alamendah Village has been separated. The first village head in

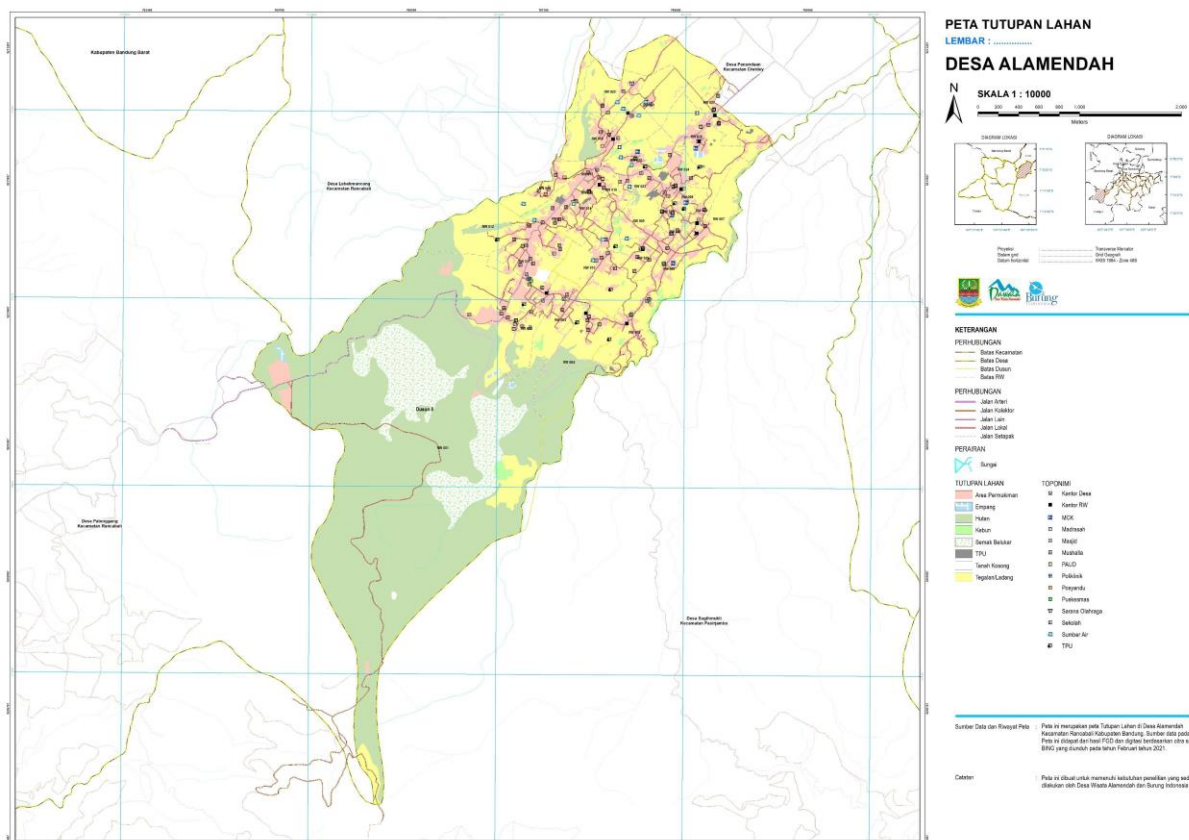


Figure 1. Map of the Alamendah Tourism Village.

Alamendah Village was Mr. Ohan Burhanuddin, who was elected in the general election. In Indonesia, Alamendah is a beautiful nature. Since the formation of the village, there have been six changes in village heads, and currently, the position is held by H. Awan Rukmawan who was elected for 2 consecutive periods. Alamendah Village was designated as a Tourism Village by the Bandung Regent Decree No. 556.42/kep.71-Dispapar/2011 on February 2, 2011. In its early days, Alamendah Tourism Village (*Desa Wisata Alamendah /DAWALA*) did not yet have tourism products and packages that could be offered to potential tourists. As a result, in the first period, *Desa Wisata Alamendah* only received a few tourist visits. In early 2019, the community began to focus on developing product innovations and tour packages by utilizing the existing potential in the village. The activity packages we offer range from farming, making processed food and micro/small/medium/enterprises (MSMEs) souvenirs, practicing pencak silats, watching karinding art performances, milking cows, learning coffee processing, and cycling around the village.

These efforts paid off. Products and tour packages that are habits and activities of the local community can become tourist attractions that create unforgettable experiences for tourists. As a result, in the second semester of 2019, the DWA was able to attract more visiting groups from various institutions, such as government institutions, schools, family groups, or the public. During that period, the total number of tourists who visited reached more than 2500 people which means it is quite high compared to other tourist villages such as pasir jambu, ciwidey, and rancabali, which are below 2,500, as stated by Wendi, the local champion of Alamendah Tourism Village. Tourists generally follow the Alamendah Trip package, which offers farming activities, milking, MSMEs, workshops, and arts.

Supporting facilities include the Alamendah Tourism Village office (*Desa Wisata Alamendah/DAWALA*) which also functions as a Tourist Information Center and a registration place for guests visiting the tourism village. The Alamendah Village area has amenities that support tourism activities, including places of worship (mosques and prayer rooms), gas stations, restaurants, and accommodation (homestays, hotels, villas, and camping grounds). The Dawala area is also connected to telecommunications and Internet networks. Alamendah Village has a rest area that can accommodate up to 20 40-seater Tourism buses. The rest of the area has been equipped with good standard toilet facilities

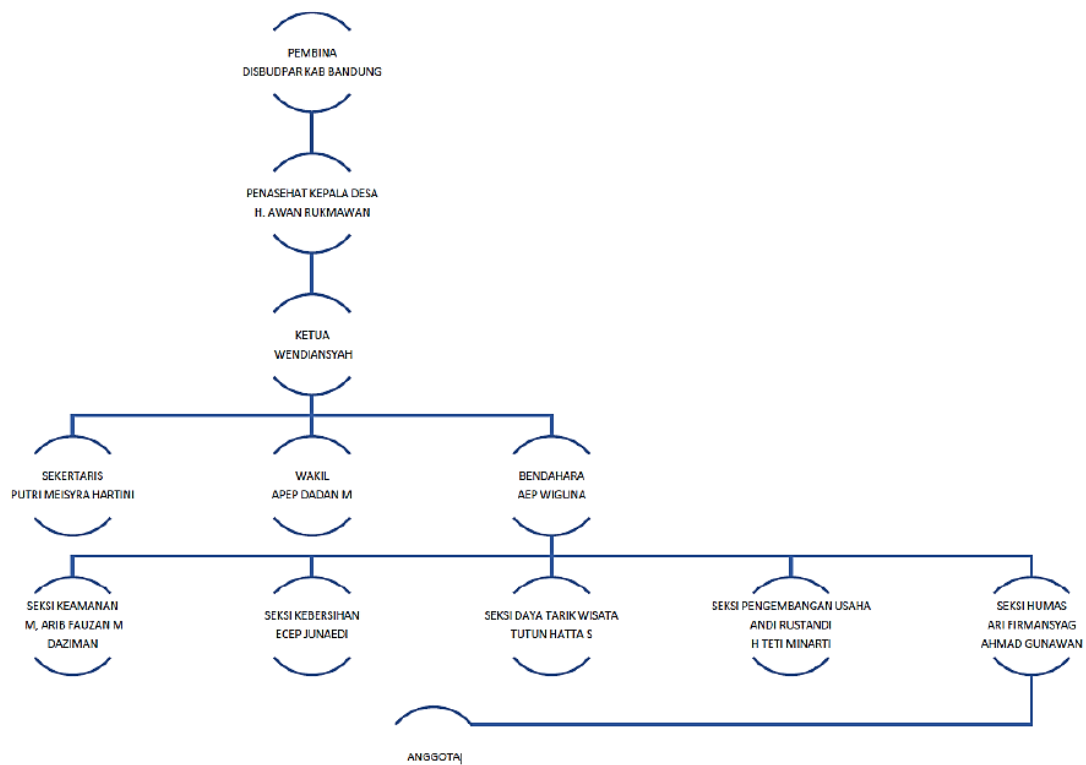


Figure 2. Organizational Structure in Alamendah Tourism Village.

with abundant availability of clean water for guests who come to visit, and most recently, we have an art studio/tourist village hall.

Tourist attraction management refers to the practice of utilizing and managing tourism resources to bring tourists to Dawala through a series of integrated operations. From planning to organizing to implementing the assessment. Dawala's philosophy in tourist management is community-based tourism, which prioritizes the active engagement of the community with the goal of providing welfare for them while maintaining environmental quality and conserving their social and cultural life. To advance tourism in Alamendah Tourism Village, the village's management developed a mission and vision statement. The vision is to realize a more advanced Alamendah Village by enhancing the economy and people's resources with community social care, as well as by stabilizing progress in numerous domains based on Religion, Culture, and Local Wisdom. Meanwhile, several interconnected missions are required to achieve the vision's goals: 1) improving professional services to the community; 2) increasing and accelerating the community's economy; and 3) having a village tourist attraction to increase village income for the community's welfare.

The Role of Local Champion

Local champions are defined as people who can influence policies, opinions, or actions in a community because of their roles and positions in society (F. A. Putri and Adinia 2018; Kayat et al. 2016). In this context, local champions take an important role in encouraging tourism village development and attaining long-term success (Xu, Zhang, and Tian 2017). Wendiansyah or Wendi, the Head of the Tourism Awareness Group, has over 20 years of expertise in travel and tourism. Wendi's experience brings change and social impact to the village community through his work program and commitment to the development of the Alam Endah Tourism Village, which aims to provide unforgettable experiences to visitors while preserving natural and cultural wealth, promoting environmentally friendly practices, and empowering local communities by involving them in the village's management and development. Wendi shows his consistency in bringing changes that have an impact on the development of Alamendah Tourism Village. When he was appointed as the Head of Tourism Village Management in 2019, Wendi dedicated himself to focusing on tourism village management and continued to learn to improve his capabilities and competencies. He continued his education at the University of Education's Resort and Leisure Management Study Program to obtain a bachelor's degree in tourism. His friendly

and open nature makes his approach to various stakeholders work well and many collaborations are received by Desa Wisata Alamendah.

Local champions have three primary characteristics: mediators, mobilizers, and facilitators (Yuwono et al., 2022). They facilitate dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration among local communities, the government, and other relevant parties. They promote active community engagement in the development of tourism villages and micro-, small-, and medium-sized companies as mobilizers. Furthermore, as facilitators, they provide the assistance, resources, and information required for the growth of Alamendah Tourism Village. As a mediator, the local champion facilitates dialog and negotiations between the local community, the government, and other relevant parties. The Local Champion seeks to create understanding and consensus in the planning and development of Alamendah tourism village. The local champion bridges the different interests of various parties to achieve a balance between economic, social, and environmental interests. The Local Champion actively listens to and considers the aspirations and inputs of the community and other stakeholders to make fair and sustainable decisions. The local champion has strong communication skills and can effectively communicate with various parties. They can convey information clearly and listen carefully to understand the perspectives and needs of each stakeholder. In addition, local champions also have good informal diplomacy skills, so they can convey aspirations and bridge communication between local communities, the government, and other relevant parties. With a nurturing and trust-building approach, the local champion succeeded in creating a conducive environment for all parties to collaborate and reach a favorable agreement in the development of the tourist village of Alamendah.

Wendi, the major instigator in the field of tourist village development, is the leader of the Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group). Despite having no prior experience in tourism, Wendi showed great passion and ingenuity for building a tourism village. He experienced several challenges, particularly in producing appealing trip packages, but frequently attended government-organized training to increase his knowledge and abilities. As a facilitator, he is in charge of offering assistance and facilitating numerous activities that contribute to the growth of Alamendah Tourism Village. He assists in organizing events such as training, workshops, and meetings aimed at increasing community knowledge and abilities in community-based tourist management.

The local champion serves as a mobilizer, encouraging active community involvement in the creation of Alamendah Tourism Village. He motivates and stimulates locals to take part in a range of tourism-related enterprises, such as tour guides, local artists, or hoteliers. Local champions enhance community awareness of the economic and social potential of community-based tourism through educational programs and seminars. In order for the community to feel heard and take an active part in the decision-making process, the local champion also organizes meetings and discussion forums that are designed to listen to the ambitions and ideas of locals. The local champion was able to enlist community support for Alamendah Tourism Village's sustainable positive development, owing to his charisma and commitment.

Local champion function as mobilizers to encourage the community and micro, small, and medium-sized companies (MSMEs) to actively participate in the creation of the Alamendah Tourism Village. The community is effectively inspired to participate in various tourism activities, such as tour guides, craftspeople, and other service providers, by a local hero with leadership and influence in the town. To raise the community's awareness of the economic and social potential of community-based tourism, he plans training exercises and workshops. Local champions undertake several functions, one of which is to actively engage MSME actors in creating a vibrant and competitive economic environment that benefits the entire community. Local champions promote and motivate MSME actors to produce new products, raise standards, and broaden marketing networks. Local entrepreneurs' capacities are built through training programs and teamwork in business management, marketing, and product development. An Alamendah tourism village's economy and tourism may expand sustainably when visionary leadership fosters a cooperative relationship between the local community, the government, and MSME players.

The key source of this research is Wendi, which is a local champion in the Alamendah tourism village. Wendiansyah, the Head of Tourism Village Management, has over twenty years of expertise in the travel and tourism industry. Using his experience, Wendiansyah brings change and social impact to village communities through his work program and commitment to developing Endah Nature Tourism Village, which includes providing an unforgettable experience to visitors while preserving natural and cultural riches, promoting environmentally friendly practices, and empowering local communities through their

involvement in village management and development. Wendi demonstrates constancy in bringing forth improvements that affect the growth of the Alamendah Tourism Village. His approach to diverse stakeholders works well because of his warm and open character, and the Alamendah Tourism Village receives a lot of cooperation. Wendi succeeded in building cooperation starting with local residents who became the Tourism Awareness Group (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata/POKDARWIS*) to outside parties. His leadership inspired local communities to work together to construct a tourist town, from promoting small enterprises owned by local residents to conserving culture such as *jaipong* dance, music (*karinding, calung, kecapi suling*), and *pencah silat* martial arts. and natural features such as waterfalls and plantations. This development cannot be carried out by himself or by local people; additional parties are required to assist with the operation of these enterprises. Wendi was able to establish connections with government parties such as the Bandung Regency Department to secure support for licenses, facility construction, and tourism advertising. Communication between organizations and academics is also formed to align knowledge and research, which is now trending with the advocacy role of the Indonesian Tourist Guide Association (*Himpunan Pramuwisata Indonesia*) to the most suitable guiding practices. Indonesian Tourist Guide Association (ITGA) is a non-political and independent professional organization at the National, Provincial and Regency / City levels which is a forum for Tourist Guides in Indonesia to communicate and cooperate between Tourist Guides, Tourist Guides with the government and other tourism associations in the context of developing Indonesian Tourism.

The Action of Achieving Integrated Rural Tourism

Local champions play an important role in encouraging the community to participate in activities or programs (Yuwono et al., 2022). The capacity of local champion to persuade local communities about engaging in tourism activities can assist Alamendah tourism village in developing and progressing for the benefit of the surrounding community. The position of the Local Champion is not readily embraced by every tourism village, but there are several difficulties that must be addressed to develop excellent synergy among all communities and stakeholders. This is a difficulty for Alamendah Tourism Village's Local Champion yet attempts to create tourism villages are still being undertaken in order to attain Integrated Rural Tourism.

A community consists of individuals who have their own unique characteristics and values, necessitating the duty of a local champion to bring these differences together (Hamzah, 2014). Local communities are frequently selfish and unwilling to collaborate in order to accomplish their goals. Attempts to integrate perspectives and build agreements are frequently difficult, and further efforts are required to reach out to various community groups and to guarantee inclusive involvement. Egos in the community can make efforts to unify ideas and aims in the development of tourism villages, whereas a lack of knowledge of a product's essential principles can improve its acceptability and success in the commercial sector. Local champions seek to exhibit their position as mediators and observers in the activity of resolving community ego to develop integrated rural tourism. Wendi as a local champion here, frequently provides equal possibilities for local inhabitants to profit from their companies, such as scheduling resident homestays for tourists staying at the Alamendah Tourism Village.

Local champions concentrate on collaboration programs with the government and other third parties to conduct training that can increase the competency of both local champions and the community as a whole (Tranggono et al., 2021). This is based on observations that demonstrate an incongruity between citizens' and local champions' willingness and ability in the process of generating tourism items; it certainly needs to be developed again. The locals have a strong desire and motivation to create Alamendah tourism village, but their competency is still at a level that requires direction from the government and other more competent parties. Making packages, managing tourist attractions, and financial management connected to the growth of tourist towns are all things that require careful consideration. To achieve integrated sustainable tourism, local champions must fulfil their role as facilitators (Sumardjo et al., 2022). Although the government offers assistance, there is sometimes a lack of continuity in tourism village development strategies and programs with other stakeholders. This can be a barrier for local champions in designing and executing sustainable initiatives; therefore, communicating with the government must be more adaptable and proactive in order to preserve continuity of assistance. Cooperation with the corporate sector and the government as owners of tourism destinations is underway but has yet to yield fruit. Coupled with the dominance of private parties, controlling land use has great economic value. The local champion's responsibility is to behave as a liaison to accomplish the vision and goal they have for Alamendah tourism village. Wendi engages with

academics and practitioners to conduct training in the Alamendah tourism village to strengthen local inhabitants' skills in managing tourism in the community. Furthermore, the Indonesian Tourist Guide Association (HPI) provides training so that locals can advise tourists.

The following issue for local champions is inefficient resource use in Alamendah tourist village; this has to be addressed collaboratively among locals in order to impact the growth of the tourist village itself. A tourist village with a local champion and a passionate spirit will not be able to function alone because it takes excitement and carries out tasks that are in line with other local communities to reach a common purpose. Blapp and Mitas (2020) stated the lack of a tourist core product indicates that the tourism village lacks a significant characteristic and identity based on the resources controlled by the community. As a result, they need to put in further efforts to raise knowledge and comprehension of the benefits of community-based tourism village development among all people to reduce disagreements and promote broad and long-term support. The existence of core products that can be developed in Alamendah tourism village will certainly have a considerable influence on the development of the village. Alamendah tourism village is dominated by moorland and fields for vegetable and fruit commodities, including leeks, strawberries, garlic, carrots, and celery. With all the agricultural potential that exists, Alamendah Tourism Village can prioritize agritourism activities as its superior product. Related tourism activities include strawberry picking, agricultural product processing, and agricultural product packaging.. This allows the local champion to function efficiently as an observer, an instigator, and a mobilizer (Aziza, 2023).

The Alamendah Tourism Village management helps the local community to achieve self-reliance and improve their quality of life (Seal, 2016). As a local champion, Wendi stated that Alamendah Tourism Village Management provides training, mentoring, and venture capital to villagers to develop small tourism-related businesses. By providing opportunities and support to the community, Alamendah Tourism Village managers empower villagers and make them the main actors in tourism management, thus creating a long-term sustainable impact. Empowerment is very important in increasing community income from agricultural products, plantation products, homestay management, MSMEs, and other sectors. The Alamendah Tourism Village management works together to empower the local community and optimize these potentials.

Alamendah Tourism Village's achievement as a recipient of many honors, including the Indonesian Tourism Village Award and *Sertifikasi Desa Wisata* from *Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif*, is inextricably linked to the management's visionary leadership, high ethics, and community empowerment. They collaborate with the community to maximize the village's natural and cultural potential. They encourage and empower people to actively engage in tourist development via in-trepid leadership. They preserve confidence and cooperate with relevant parties with great integrity. They also provide opportunities for people to participate in tourist management and to enhance their well-being through community empowerment. Alamendah Tourism Village has become a thriving tourism destination that gives substantial advantages to the local community as a result of Local champion combination.

Wendi as a local Champion in Alamendah Tourism Village as the major starter, recognized an opportunity in the *Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia* (ADWI) program and devised a strategy to join in the program. They saw that the event was an excellent opportunity to market Alamendah Tourism Village to a larger community and potential tourists. They were able to exhibit the village's tourist potential and nature by participating in the ADWI program, which earned them the national pilot village prize and the second-best ADWI digitalization category in 2021. Alamendah Tourism Village's administration prepared everything required to participate in the ADWI program. They collaborate closely with the people of the local community to improve tourism infrastructure, increase service quality, and create distinctive activities that appeal to tourists. They also utilize social media and other forms of communication to spread the word about their involvement in the ADWI program and urge travelers to visit Alamendah Tourism Village (Risda et al., 2023).

Effective and efficient utilization of resources is carried out by local champion to achieve their goal in the development of Alamendah tourism village. The actions taken are to build cooperation with local governments and non-governmental organizations with the aim of obtaining assistance and additional income for the cost of developing a tourist village (Nainggolan et al., 2020). In addition to maintaining relationships with third parties, utilizing local potential is also one of the local champion's efforts in advancing Alamendah tourism village, namely by advancing the production of handicrafts and



Figure 3. Alamendah Tourism Village in *Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia 2021* and *Sertification with Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Indonesia 2022*.

traditional food to provide additional income for local communities. Currently, the home industry has evolved from a place to shop souvenirs to an educational tourist attraction for guests, with activities ranging from learning to manufacturing, testing results, and product packaging. Alamendah offers an instructional package that includes converting animal waste into biogas and plastic waste into souvenir recycling. The potential of agriculture and farms in Alamendah tourism village is considered a resource that can provide significant economic benefits in the tourism sector, such as attractive tour packages. Promotion was also carried out to highlight the attractiveness of educational tourism for agriculture and the farms owned by this tourist village. In addition, they encourage local communities to develop processed products from agricultural and farm products, such as specialty foods, traditional drinks, or handicraft products, inspired by these natural resources. Tourism activities in Alamendah are able to perform perfectly through Wendi's ability as a local champion to influence local people's willingness to participate in tourism activities, and have observed the resources owned by his village and tried to manage them to provide more benefits to local residents.

Homestay development in Alamendah tourism village is also a potential managed by local champion. Local residents' participation is needed because it is the core product of this homestay program. Efforts made by local champions to advance this accommodation include improving existing accommodation facilities, maintaining service quality, and promoting homestays as unique and authentic accommodations for travelers. By developing homestays, they can provide direct economic opportunities to local communities, which are able to host tourists and earn additional income from homestays (Regmi & Walter, 2016). Local champion become mediators between local communities and tourists who visit Alamendah tourism village. The management conducted in Alamendah village also includes the development of MSMEs, where local champions play the role of improving the quality of MSME products, involving training and mentoring to improve entrepreneurial skills and business management. They use appropriate online and offline marketing channels to promote MSME products from Alamendah Tourism Village to tourists and the local markets. By harnessing the potential of MSMEs, they can provide economic opportunities to local communities and strengthen the village's appeal as a center for local crafts and products.

Therefore, the local champion sees the potential of human resources in Alamendah Tourism Village, which can be utilized to support the development of the tourism sector in the village. The training required in the tourism industry includes customer services, tour guides, or other specialized skills. Higher-quality human resources will create a different travel experience for visitors, which can strengthen the village's reputation as a friendly and professional tourist destination. In utilizing existing resources, the management of Alamendah Tourism Village has succeeded in creating synergies that provide economic opportunities in the village. Through the development of agriculture, plantations, homestays, and MSMEs as well as the empowerment of local community resources, they can increase the income and welfare of local people. This approach not only provides economic benefits but also strengthens the village's identity and continuity as a unique and sustainable tourist destination. Through the role of local champion, the management of Alamendah Tourism Village has become the main driver in developing the village. With a powerful vision, they have successfully created an environment that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. Through their dedicated efforts, the village has become an attractive tourist destination that provides positive benefits to both the local community and tourists visiting the village.

Development needs to be accompanied by comprehensive management, and after advancing the product and human resource elements, it is necessary to have proper management in the financial aspect. Wendi, as a local champion, ensures that the proceeds from the plantations and farms associated with the activities of Alamendah Tourism Village are distributed evenly among the villagers involved. Wendi is wise in organizing the distribution system so that every member of the village community has an equal opportunity to benefit economically from the sector. He works to reduce economic disparities between villagers and encourages more equitable welfare. For example, if there are a large number of tourists visiting, Wendi organized the management of Alamendah Tourism Village to involve all local communities, such as farmers, pencak silat and dance arts, homestay managers, MSME communities, and the surrounding community. This is certainly income for each party, and the distribution also provides other benefits for them. In addition, wendi as a local champion also plays a role as an environmental stabilizer, which preserves the natural environment and invites the community to do the same. They realize that the success of tourism in Alamendah Tourism Village is highly dependent on the preservation of the natural environment. Therefore, they strive to preserve nature and involve villagers in environmental conservation programs (Sharif et al., 2017).

Wendi prioritize the principles of ecotourism and implements environmentally friendly policies in Alamendah tourism village so that tourism runs in line with environmental sustainability. Ecotourism has been used for nature conservation (Hsu, 2019). The type of nature conservation here is the preservation of nature, so it has a high use value in society. This principle can be implemented if the manager focuses on environmental conservation rather than ecotourism. The principle of conservation itself means having concern, responsibility, and commitment to the preservation of the natural and cultural environment; implementing responsible business principles; and a sustainable economy.

Wendi, as a Local Champion at Alamendah Tourism Village, implemented environmental conservation through a collaborative tree-planting program. The program was organized to commemorate World Tree Day in collaboration with the government, NGOs, and the village community. In addition, the environmental conservation program has also received assistance from academics in planning waste management. Waste management is one of the problems that they are trying to simultaneously overcome. One way to overcome this problem is to continue to invite the community and tourists to keep the environment clean while also contributing to safeguarding, preserving, and respecting the cultural heritage and local traditions of a community or region. They are responsible for understanding, appreciating, and promoting the cultures, customs, arts, languages, and traditional values integral to the identity and history of the communities involved. This role includes efforts to prevent the loss or oblivion of traditions as well as ensuring that the presence of tourism or other economic activities does not damage or negatively alter existing cultural heritage (Murni et al., 2018). Cultural conservation has a positive impact such as increasing cultural creativity, conserving local culture in Alamendah Tourism Village.

The management of Alamendah Tourism Village understands that the culture of the people in the village must be preserved. One of the cultures that are preserved is *Pencak Silat*. The existence of *Pencak Silat* was initially only a martial arts practice; then, the local champion tried to approach the *Pencak Silat* manager and invited him to perform *Pencak Silat* when tourists visited. Eventually, *Pencak Silat* became one of the spectacles attracting tourists to visit Alamendah Tourism Village. The fame of *Pencak Silat* as an interesting spectacle for tourists has attracted other residents, especially young people, to join the hermitage.

In addition to *Pencak Silat*, dance and music are also utilized by them and promoted by welcoming tourists or important guests from the government. Sundanese dance and music are performances that can be seen on various tour packages. In addition to the arts, it turns out that the culture of farming, gardening and even the daily culture of the Alamendah Tourism Village community is used as a characteristic of this rural tourism. Tourists also greatly appreciated entertainment from *Pencak Silat*, Sundanese dance and music, and the daily culture of the community. Tourists are pleased to see that the Alamendah Tourism Village offers a memorable experience, especially for city dwellers whose daily lives are accompanied by the hustle and bustle of work and other activities.

As a local champion, Wendi helps local communities understand the importance of their cultural heritage and empowers them to participate in conservation activities and benefit from preservation efforts. In carrying out this role, it collaborates with various parties, including local communities, cultural leaders, non-profit organizations, and government agencies, to create wider awareness of the importance of cultural heritage preservation and find sustainable solutions to promote and preserve it

(Cahyaningrum, 2017). The government that Wendi approached was the Bandung Regency Tourism Office, which helped create amenities in Alamendah and promote this tourism village in a way that tourist who wished to visit could readily recognize it.

The ability of Wendi as a local champion is a factor for a village to develop, and the spirit of innovating and utilizing the potential of existing resources makes a local champion trustworthy and influential in a tourist village (Simanjuntak & Sariffuddin, 2017). The communication and collaboration that Wendi has carried out have progressed well and remain in sync with the local people of Alamendah tourist village, academics, government, and organizations that aid in the growth and progression of this tourism village. Local champions can help integrate all the resources owned by the village, ultimately producing a profit that can advance the welfare of the local community. Integrated rural tourism can be formed not only through the encouragement of local champions but also through the synergy of local communities and third parties. Development based on a common goal and equal desire can establish Alamendah as a sustainably profitable tourism village.

CONCLUSION

Local Champion, with their personalities and potential to become leaders, need to take on an important role in developing Integrated Rural Tourism in Alamendah tourism village. Local champions are motivated to transform into action, allowing them to work as facilitators, mobilizers, and mediators between the local community and third parties. The local champion's willingness and competence must go hand-in-hand with the integration of academia, government, and the community itself. Alamendah Tourism Village, which got a government award, has proven to be a tourism village that has synergized with the presence of local champion who constantly inspire and actualize programs to achieve integrated rural tourism. A tourist village's potential consists not purely of its natural resources, with all of its local expertise and culture, but also of the people's resources that can manage it to the extent that it produces a commercial value that eventually delivers sustainable advantages and welfare for the entire community. The researcher suggests further research on the response and role of local communities in responding to local champion who have initiated the development of Alamendah tourism village, additional research can offer a broader view of all factors that comprise an integrated tourism village.

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