

# AN EVALUATION OF REJOWINANGUN'S ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM VILLAGE CERTIFICATION IN 2024

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the success of Rejowinangun Tourism Village, Yogyakarta, in achieving the Sustainable Tourism Village designation in 2024. Rejowinangun Tourism Village is recognized as one of the top 50 tourism villages by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. This research employed a qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and documentation methods. Rejowinangun Tourism Village has implemented sustainability principles through institutional strengthening, community participation, business cluster diversification, cultural preservation, and community-based environmental management. The findings reveal that consistent documentation, strong institutional governance, synergy among business clusters, and collaboration with external stakeholders were the key factors contributing to its success. The study also identifies several challenges, including initial community resistance, limited human resources, and inadequate facilities, which were successfully addressed through innovative, inclusive, and community-based approaches. Furthermore, the research explores sustainable tourism management strategies, the challenges encountered, and the strategic measures undertaken to obtain sustainable tourism village certification. The findings provide important implications for other tourism villages in Indonesia seeking to adopt sustainable management models that support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Keyword:** sustainable tourism, certification, sustainable tourism village, Rejowinangun Tourism Village, tourism cluster

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## Introduction

The concept of sustainable tourism development emerged as a response to the need to balance the growth of the tourism industry with environmental conservation efforts, social empowerment, and local economic well-being. Sustainable tourism aims to minimize the negative impacts of tourism activities while maximizing benefits for local communities and the surrounding environment. According to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), there are four main pillars of sustainable destination management: responsible destination management, socio-economic sustainability, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. In line with these principles, the development of sustainable tourism villages in Indonesia should be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize a balance between economic growth, natural resource conservation, and community empowerment (GSTC, 2019).

Tourism villages have emerged as a strategic approach to promoting sustainable rural development by encouraging the active participation of local communities in managing tourism destinations within their own areas. This model not only contributes to local economic development but also emphasizes the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental resources. According to data from the Indonesian Tourism Village Network (Jadesta), as of October 2024, Indonesia had 6,026 tourism villages categorized into four levels of development: Pioneer Tourism Villages, Developing Tourism Villages, Advanced Tourism Villages, and

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Independent Tourism Villages (Candra, 2024). Among these, Rejowinangun one of tourism villages in Yogyakarta represents a notable example of a tourism village that has successfully embraced sustainable tourism principles.



*Figure 1. Award Charter of Rejowinangun Tourism Village as a Sustainable Tourism Village*

Source: Personal Documentation, 2024

Rejowinangun Tourism Village has been recognized as one of Indonesia's Top 50 Tourism Villages by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. The village offers five tourism clusters, namely agro-education, handicrafts, culinary tourism, herbal-based tourism, and arts and cultural experiences. Furthermore, Rejowinangun Tourism Village participated in the Sustainable Tourism Village Certification program organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in August 2024 as seen in figure 1. This certification aims to assess the sustainability performance of tourism destinations based on internationally recognized standards endorsed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Through this initiative, tourism destinations are encouraged to maximize the benefits of tourism development while minimizing its potential negative impacts on local communities and the environment.

Despite the continuous growth in the number of tourism villages across Indonesia, only a limited number have successfully obtained Sustainable Tourism Village certification (Kusumawardhani et al., 2024). This condition indicates a significant gap between the development potential of tourism villages and their ability to achieve formal sustainability recognition. Existing studies have primarily focused on tourism potential and the socio-economic impacts of tourism development (Syaiful & Fafurida, 2019; Permatasari et al., 2022; Kurnianingtyas et al., 2024). However, relatively few studies have examined in depth the management processes, strategies, and challenges involved in obtaining Sustainable Tourism Village certification. Furthermore, although previous research has explored the impacts of tourism certification (Pramudya & Hidayat, 2024; Adira, 2022), limited attention has been

given to the practical measures and management approaches required to achieve such certification, particularly within the context of implementing sustainable tourism principles at the local level.

Therefore, the research gap addressed in this study lies in the limited understanding of how sustainable tourism villages are managed in practice, particularly regarding the implementation of sustainability principles and certification requirements at the local level. This study focuses on the sustainable tourism management practices adopted by Rejowinangun Tourism Village in its successful pursuit of Sustainable Tourism Village certification in 2024. Specifically, the research aims to identify strategic actions and best practices that can be adopted by other tourism villages seeking to obtain sustainability certification through the implementation of sustainable tourism pillars and effective management strategies. In addition, this study analyzes the challenges encountered throughout the certification process and the approaches employed to overcome them.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors contributing to the success of Rejowinangun Tourism Village in achieving the Sustainable Tourism Village designation in 2024. This approach was selected because it provides an opportunity to explore complex phenomena within a specific context. The study was conducted in Rejowinangun Tourism Village, Yogyakarta City, which was purposively selected due to its achievement as a Sustainable Tourism Village, making it a relevant case study for this research. Data were collected through several methods, including observation, interviews, and documentation.



*Figure 2. Interview with the Manager of Rejowinangun Tourism Village*

Source: Personal Documentation, 2024.

Interviews were conducted with the management of Rejowinangun Tourism Village as seen in figure 2. The interviews were semi-structured and carried out in-depth to obtain comprehensive information regarding tourism management practices and sustainability initiatives. Observations were undertaken

across the village's five tourism clusters, namely agro-education, handicrafts, culinary tourism, herbal tourism, and arts and cultural tourism. During the observation process, photographs and videos were taken to support and validate the data obtained through interviews. Archival records and other relevant documents also served as sources of data for this study. Data collection was conducted between November and December 2024.

The data sources consisted of interview results and field observations supported by photographs, archival documents, and recordings. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which included data coding, theme identification based on sustainability indicators (economic, social, and environmental dimensions), and an examination of the relationships between success factors and the achievement of the Sustainable Tourism Village designation. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy and credibility of the data provided by the informants.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Key Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Tourism Village Certification



*Figure 3. Documents of Rejowinangun Tourism Village*  
Source: Personal Documentation, 2024.

##### a. Consistent and Well-Planned Documentation

Rejowinangun Tourism Village has consistently implemented a practice of documenting all activities, both visually and in written form, including Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), photographs, and training records as seen in figure 3. During the assessment process, assessors examined up to 170 detailed indicators, and all required documents had been prepared in advance. These documents were stored in both digital and physical formats, ensuring easy accessibility whenever needed.

Rejowinangun Tourism Village successfully obtained the Sustainable Tourism Village Certification in 2024, awarded by the Certification Body of the Indonesian Sustainable Tourism Council (CB-ISTC). This achievement was made possible through the consistent implementation of sustainable tourism principles in accordance with the Sustainable Tourism Destination Standards. This achievement reflects the village's consistent implementation of sustainable tourism principles in accordance with the Indonesian Sustainable Tourism Standards stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia No. 9 of 2021.

The principles of sustainable tourism encompass four main dimensions, namely sustainable management, socio-economic sustainability, cultural sustainability, and environmental sustainability. Although obtaining this certification represents a remarkable achievement, the primary objective of Rejowinangun Tourism Village remains community empowerment aimed at improving local livelihoods. The certification process was not easy, as Rejowinangun Tourism Village was required to fulfill the requirements of the four sustainability pillars, consisting of 38 sub-criteria and 174 indicators. Consequently, the village management had to prepare a wide range of detailed supporting documents, including Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), photographs, and relevant training records.

This challenge was effectively anticipated by the management of Rejowinangun Tourism Village. Documentation was carried out systematically and strategically, not only to meet certification requirements but also to facilitate the management of daily activities. Whenever visitors or stakeholders arrived, the management was well prepared with all relevant documents. In fact, the process of organizing and maintaining documentation had begun when Rejowinangun Tourism Village participated in the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI) and received Second Place in the Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environmental Sustainability (CHSE) category in 2021 (Kuswaraharja, 2021).

#### **b. Strong Institutional Capacity**

Institutional capacity is one of the key factors in achieving recognition as a sustainable tourism village. According to Hidayat & Muchtar (2022), institutional arrangements play a crucial role in determining the success of tourism village management. Institutions are responsible for managing resources and distributing benefits to enhance tourism potential. In addition, institutions facilitate and encourage community participation in tourism development activities (Triambodo & Damanik, 2015). Community capacity is therefore essential in institutional development, both at the organizational and individual levels, to support the advancement of tourism villages.

Community leaders in Rejowinangun Tourism Village play an important role by providing consistent direction and guidance toward achieving shared goals. Furthermore, maintaining community enthusiasm and motivation serves as a major driving force behind all activities undertaken. The management of Rejowinangun Tourism Village is community-based and operates through the establishment of a Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis). The organizational structure of the Pokdarwis consists of a core management team, including a chairperson, secretary, and treasurer, as well as several divisions responsible for activities, attractions, marketing, catering, and security. Community participation in Rejowinangun Tourism Village is relatively inclusive, involving various groups ranging from children, women, and men to youth and older adults. To support this

participation, human resource development has been implemented through several stages, including community mapping, identifying individuals according to their areas of expertise, fostering self-confidence and teamwork, assigning responsibilities, and encouraging community members to undertake activities according to their respective competencies. This finding supports Ernawati (2022), who emphasized the importance of human resource development in advancing tourism villages.

### c. Local Community Involvement

The awards and achievements obtained by Rejowinangun Tourism Village cannot be separated from the active participation of the local community. According to Ernawati (2022), tourism villages need to strengthen the role of local communities in order to understand and address problems more effectively. In the context of Rejowinangun Tourism Village, community involvement initially posed a significant challenge. However, the management did not work independently; local residents were involved from the planning stage through to the implementation of tourism activities. Although not all community members responded positively at the beginning, their participation eventually generated direct economic and social benefits for the community.

Rejowinangun Tourism Village consists of several main tourism clusters that are managed directly by community groups. The cultural cluster (Neighborhood Units/RW 01–05) includes activities such as keroncong music, karawitan, the Manuk Beri heritage site, hadroh performances, macapat singing, gamelan music, ketoprak theater, and jatilan traditional dance. The handicraft cluster (RW 06–07) produces a variety of products, including batik, reverse glass paintings, fiber-based crafts, blangkon traditional headwear, handicrafts made from inorganic waste, and knitted products. The herbal cluster (RW 08–09) manages the production of traditional herbal drinks and provides educational activities related to medicinal plants. The culinary cluster (RW 10) offers traditional foods such as bakmi Jawa, gudeg, various types of chips, and traditional snacks. Meanwhile, the agro-tourism cluster (RW 11–13) focuses on orchid cultivation, educational programs on vegetable and fruit farming, the Flori Village initiative, and hydroponic farming systems. Each cluster possesses unique characteristics and contributes to the attractiveness of Kampung Wisata Rejowinangun as a sustainable tourism destination.

All clusters support and collaborate with one another to ensure balance in tourism village management. The potential of each cluster has been integrated into tourism packages that can be tailored to visitors' preferences. For example, when visitors participate in activities within the handicraft cluster but wish to experience traditional herbal products, items from the herbal cluster are delivered directly to that location. This synergistic system ensures that each cluster benefits economically from tourist visits. Revenue generated from tourism activities is subsequently used for capacity building and further development, thereby ensuring the sustainability of activities within each cluster.

Community involvement in cluster management not only fosters a sense of ownership but also generates various direct benefits. Economic benefits are reflected in increased income from the sale of local products. Social empowerment is achieved through strengthened solidarity and cooperation

among residents. In addition, community capacity development is enhanced through training and educational programs related to cluster management, which improve local skills and competencies. Through this approach, Rejowinangun Tourism Village serves as a successful example of community empowerment that supports the sustainability of community-based tourism development.

### **Implementation of Sustainability Pillars in Tourism Village Management**



*Figure 4. Business Clusters in Rejowinangun Tourism Village*

Source: Personal Documentation, 2024.

#### **a. Economic Aspects**

Rejowinangun Tourism Village has successfully created five main business clusters focused on the agricultural, herbal, craft, culinary, and also arts and culture sectors as seen in figure 4. This diverse business mix aims to increase community income while introducing local potential to tourists. Each business cluster is run by a community group that participates directly in its management. Agricultural cluster manages vegetable and fruit gardens, while the craft cluster creates local products for sale to tourists. Arts and culture cluster showcases local arts and culture. Herbal cluster provides herbal preparations such as traditional herbal medicine (jamu). Lastly, culinary cluster offers a variety of local Yogyakarta specialties.

The success of this business diversification not only creates economic opportunities for the community but also introduces local products with added value that can increase village and community income. Their efforts to increase the marketing of local products include partnerships with star-rated hotels in the surrounding area. Local products such as herbal medicine and chips, previously sold only in local markets, can now be marketed at a higher selling price thanks to innovations in packaging. Innovation plays a crucial role in increasing economic competitiveness.

Innovation can help increase productivity, efficiency, quality, and product diversification, as well as expand markets and increase the added value of a product or service (Aidhi et al., 2023). This

collaboration has a significant impact, both in increasing community income and marketing local products to a wider market. Packaging innovation is key to increase the attractiveness of local products, ensuring their acceptance by a wider market. This partnership approach demonstrates that collaboration with external parties can open new opportunities for communities to market their products at a higher level.

#### **b. Socio-Cultural Aspects**

Rejowinangun Tourism Village preserves and maintains local traditions as a tourist attraction. One effort to maintain local culture is by establishing an arts studio that serves as a center for cultural activities, such as gamelan, ketoprak, karawitan, traditional dance, and other performing arts. This studio serves not only as a place for the community to gather and learn art, but also as a means of preserving cultural heritage. Syarif et al. (2023) state that cultural heritage is an asset in tourism development.

The arts and culture displayed in this studio also attract tourists who want to witness and learn about traditional culture. Through these efforts, the community in the tourist village not only preserves their culture but also develops a tradition-based creative economy. One of their efforts in cultural preservation is to hold regular programs that involve the community in arts performances and cultural activities. Programs such as traditional arts performances, craft exhibitions, and cultural festivals are part of the tourist attraction that also serves as a means of cultural preservation. These activities not only attract tourists but also strengthen the community's sense of pride in their traditions and culture. Arts performances and cultural activities also serve as educational tools for the younger generation and provide opportunities for the community to actively participate in cultural activities that enhance their skills in the arts and performing arts.

#### **c. Environmental Aspects**

Environmental management in the Rejowinangun Tourism Village is carried out through collaboration with the local community, particularly through the *dasawisma* groups. These groups play an active role in maintaining environmental cleanliness and growing productive crops such as vegetables and fruit. In addition to maintaining cleanliness, they also manage areas that can generate income for the community, such as collectively managed vegetable gardens. Environmental preservation is crucial as it is a key aspect of sustainable tourism village management. The natural environment is also supported by the safety, cleanliness, and comfort of tourists during their stay at the destination (Kamat, 2012).

The challenge faced by Rejowinangun Tourism Village in environmental management is the difficulty in utilizing vacant land owned by owners from outside the area. This land is often left unmaintained, resulting in areas that could be used for agriculture or tourism activities being neglected. This presents difficulties in managing the tourism village, particularly in terms of land utilization for economic and environmental purposes. The solution to this challenge is for the tourism village to implement an agro-cluster management system based on the Neighborhood Association (RT). In this system, each RT is responsible for managing a specific area, including the use of vacant land for planting productive crops. This solution helps alleviate the problem of neglected land and creates economic

opportunities for the local community. RT-based management also strengthens the community's sense of togetherness and collective responsibility for their environment.

### **Obstacles and Efforts to Overcome Them**

#### **a. Initial Challenges in Socialization**

Early in the development of the Rejowinangun Tourism Village, one of the biggest obstacles was the low level of community participation. Pham Hong et al. (2021) argue that community participation in tourism development has a positive impact on community support for it. Initially, low public awareness of the potential of the village led to skepticism and disbelief that the tourism village could provide tangible benefits. This skepticism arose from the lack of immediate tangible results.

Efforts to address these challenges included intensive socialization programs conducted over the first two years. Socialization aimed to educate the community about the potential they possess and the potential they can develop through tourism villages was done continuously. This process consist of direct community participation through regular meetings, discussions, and activities that actively involved them in tourism village management. The program's success began to be visible when tangible evidence was seen within the community.

One of the most striking achievements is the increase in community income. With the establishment of business clusters in areas such as agriculture, crafts, culinary, herbal medicine, and also arts and culture, the community is beginning to experience direct economic benefits from the tourism village. Local products produced by the community, such as herbal medicine, chips, and handicrafts, are being marketed more widely, even to star-rated hotels, thereby increasing their income. These success stories attract and mobilize community participation. When communities see the benefits in the form of additional income and improved quality of life, more and more people are joining and supporting the tourism village program.

#### **b. Limitedness of Human Resources and Time**

All activities and events that occur must be recorded and stored properly from the beginning for easy access when needed. If documentation is done routinely, when there is an urgent matter, the manager only needs to involve one or two people responsible for managing documents stored on a laptop. However, starting from scratch, such as the process of writing and creating documents will be very difficult. Therefore, it is important to ensure that documents are stored neatly and can be easily found by category or year. When available time is limited, additional personnel are needed. During the certification process, Rejowinangun Tourism Village Team worked hard for three to four days to complete the task.

The main obstacle faced was limited human resources (HR), as many individuals had other responsibilities and required full focus to complete the tasks at hand, even though this HR factor is crucial (Ernawati, 2022). Although only four people were assigned, high team spirit was crucial for achieving maximum results. Furthermore, certification preparations coincided with another competition, namely a regional competition. The key to success in this situation lay in the ability to remain focused and committed to completing the work without delay.

### c. Limited Facilities in Urban Areas

According to Permatasari et al (2022), suboptimal facilities can hinder tourist visits, while improving facilities has the potential to increase tourist satisfaction (Puspitasari, 2025). In terms of facilities, Rejowinangun Tourism Village has public infrastructure in the form of electricity, water, telecommunications, and waste management. They have public facilities which include security, finance, banking, business, health, sanitation and hygiene, specifically for people with physical disabilities, children and the elderly, recreation, parking, and house of worship. There are also tourism facilities include accommodation, restaurants, tourism information and services, immigration, Tourist Information Center (TIC) and e-tourism kiosks, tourism police and tourism task forces, souvenir shops, signposts, tourist information boards, tourist traffic signs, and landforms. Rejowinangun Tourism Village also has Tourism Business Standardization and Certification.

However, Rejowinangun Tourism Village faces limitations, including a lack of village funds or cash, unlike most tourism villages, resulting in no funds to build public facilities, such as toilets. Therefore, the management collaborated or signed an MoU with all mosques in the Rejowinangun Village to provide public toilets. Visitors, regardless of location, can utilize these facilities. Through collaboration with various parties, they have succeeded in becoming a tourist destination amidst the dense residential areas of Yogyakarta City, which offers various potential, clusters, and educational opportunities.

## **Lessons Learned and Implications for Other Tourism Villages**

### a. Consistent and Organized Documentation

One important lesson learned from the Rejowinangun Tourism Village is the consistent and organized documentation practices from the outset. This documentation covers all activities, from planning to implementation, recorded in both written and digital formats. This approach is very helpful in meeting the requirements for sustainable tourism village certification, as all relevant documents are easily accessible at any time. Other tourism villages can adopt a similar strategy to ensure that all aspects of activities are properly archived. Besides providing evidence of achievement, good documentation can also be used as an evaluation tool and a guide for planning future programs.

### b. Sustainable Community Involvement

Rejowinangun Tourism Village demonstrates that active community involvement is a key element in the success of a tourism village. One factor ensuring sustainability of a tourism program is direct benefits felt by the community. When communities see economic improvements, social empowerment, or cultural preservation relevant to their daily lives, their support for the tourism program will continue. This involvement process can begin from the planning stage to the implementation of activities, so that the community is not only the implementer but also feels ownership of the tourism destination. Other tourism villages can learn from this by encouraging active

community participation through training, group discussions, and clearly delineating roles in tourism destination management.

c. Creativity and Collaboration

Innovation and collaboration are key strategies for maintaining the sustainability of tourist villages. Rejowinangun Tourism Village has successfully established partnerships with various parties, including star-rated hotels, to market local products such as herbal medicine and chips with higher added value. This collaboration expands the market for local products while providing a direct economic impact to the community. Other tourist villages can utilize a similar approach by collaborating with tourism industry players or related institutions. Furthermore, creativity in product diversification and packaging innovation can increase the competitiveness of tourist villages in the competitive market. This will ensure not only their survival but also develop sustainability.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Yogyakarta's Rejowinangun Tourism Village is a successful example of a sustainable tourism village in Indonesia, thanks to the implementation of effective management strategies, inclusive community engagement, and innovation in addressing challenges. This success demonstrates the importance of structured management, from activity documentation and institutional strengthening to business diversification through tourism clusters. Furthermore, tourism sustainability is also achieved through efforts to preserve local culture, increase community capacity, and collaborate with external parties.

However, the journey to becoming a sustainable tourism village was not without obstacles. Rejowinangun Tourism Village faced challenges ranging from initial community resistance to limited human resources and facilities. These challenges were successfully overcome through an inclusive, innovative, and community-based approach. A key lesson from Rejowinangun Tourism Village is the need for a commitment to sustainability principles, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, as well as creative adaptation to various limitations.

This research also provides practical contributions to several stakeholders. For tourism village managers, the principles of tourism village sustainability that have been implemented can be directed toward readiness for tourism village certification. Communities can participate more actively and play a role in supporting tourism villages in their pursuit of certification. The government can encourage tourism villages deemed ready and qualified to participate in certification.

The implications of this study indicate that Rejowinangun Tourism Village management model can be replicated by other tourism villages in Indonesia, with adjustments to their respective local contexts. This success also demonstrates that tourism villages are drivers of the local economy and instruments for cultural and environmental preservation, supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, a sustainable approach must be a priority in any tourism village development initiative to ensure long-term benefits for local communities and the surrounding environment. Future studies can be conducted by comparing certified and uncertified tourism villages. Further research can also explore the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, not just managers.

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## Declaration of Interest Statement

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