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## Community Empowerment On Sustainable Outdoor Recreation In Pangandaran Tourist Destination

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### *Abstract*

*This research examines the diverse forms of community involvement in tourism within Pangandaran Regency, highlighting its potential for sustainable development. The region features 270 tourist attractions categorized into cultural, man-made, and natural types, with a significant emphasis on eco-tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities, particularly in the Parigi sub-district. The growing number of restaurants and micro-enterprises reflects the evolving landscape of tourism-related economic activities and underscores the interconnection between the local and tourism industries. Active community participation in various tourism organizations indicates a robust network essential for promoting tourism activities and ensuring local stakeholders play a crucial role in the sector's growth and sustainability. Despite these strengths, the research identifies significant challenges related to infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. Overcrowding during peak seasons places pressure on local facilities, while a lack of awareness about sustainable tourism practices among residents hampers effective participation. Enhancing community education on eco-friendly practices and establishing collaborative frameworks among stakeholders is essential to cultivating a sustainable tourism ecosystem. By addressing these challenges and leveraging community strengths, Pangandaran can foster a tourism landscape that generates economic benefits while preserving its rich cultural and natural heritage. Promoting sustainable practices and fostering a sense of shared responsibility among residents will be crucial for ensuring the long-term viability and success of tourism in the region.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Pangandaran, located on the southern coast of Java, Indonesia, has emerged as a prominent outdoor tourism destination renowned for its stunning natural landscapes and cultural significance. This region offers various outdoor activities, particularly water-based recreation, such as body rafting, river tubing, and boating. These activities have become increasingly popular among adventure-seeking tourists and align with Pangandaran's strategic objective of promoting ecotourism. Recent efforts by local authorities and private enterprises have focused on improving tourism infrastructure while maintaining the region's environmental integrity. For example, coastal areas have been privatized to support tourism growth and protect natural resources, especially beaches and marine ecosystems (Sulyanati & Nasihuddin, 2023).

A shift towards sustainable tourism practices has marked the post-pandemic recovery of Pangandaran's tourism sector. There is a growing demand for travel experiences that emphasize environmental conservation and cultural engagement, reflecting global trends in eco-friendly tourism (Antariksa et al., 2022). This shift has prompted local tourism stakeholders to adopt sustainable business models integrating local culture and nature into their offerings. River-based activities, such as body rafting and river tubing, have become popular among tourists seeking adrenaline-pumping

experiences, contributing to both the tourism portfolio and the local economy. These activities create employment opportunities and support local entrepreneurship, especially in guiding and safety services. Traditional boat tours along the region's rivers, once small family-run ventures, have evolved into more organized operations, drawing domestic and international visitors (Kijima et al., 2024).

The local government's strategic marketing efforts have positioned Pangandaran as a leading destination for outdoor adventure, highlighting its rich biodiversity, including primate tourism focused on the endemic ebony langurs. This integration of conservation and tourism provides educational experiences for visitors and generates revenue to support conservation initiatives (Nijman, 2022). As Pangandaran strives to become a competitive player in the global tourism market, adopting sustainable tourism practices and promoting unique outdoor experiences will be key drivers of its long-term growth. Outdoor recreation businesses play a pivotal role in the economic development of Pangandaran. They attract diverse tourists, stimulating local economies through spending on hospitality, food services, and retail. As noted by (Lindberg et al., 2021), nature-based tourism can enhance community resilience by creating economic opportunities that help local populations adapt to environmental changes. In the context of Pangandaran, outdoor activities like surfing and eco-tours promote sustainable practices that benefit both the local ecosystem and the community. Furthermore, outdoor recreation has been shown to improve the well-being of residents by fostering a sense of community and social cohesion, especially in rural areas (Colley et al., 2023).

Environmental sustainability remains a critical concern for outdoor recreation in Pangandaran. Managing natural resources effectively ensures that tourism growth does not compromise the region's ecological integrity. (Manning & Anderson, 2012) emphasize the importance of management strategies to mitigate the environmental impact of outdoor activities, a particularly relevant challenge given the growing pressures of tourism on local ecosystems (Atik et al., 2012). The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased interest in nature-based and local tourism experiences. This shift presents an opportunity for Pangandaran's outdoor recreation businesses to adapt and cater to tourists seeking safe, socially distanced, and immersive outdoor activities (Dong et al., 2023).

A crucial aspect of Pangandaran's tourism landscape is the involvement of the local community. The active participation of residents in outdoor tourism ventures significantly enhances tourism's economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Local entrepreneurs have capitalized on the region's tourism potential by offering services such as equipment rentals, local cuisine, and homestays, which provide tourists with an authentic experience of the traditional Pangandaran lifestyle. This entrepreneurial activity generates income and fosters a sense of ownership and pride in the region's cultural heritage, which is vital for sustainable tourism development (Xing & Dangerfield, 2018). Community-based tourism initiatives ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are equitably distributed among residents, often through collaborative management of tourist activities like river tours and wildlife observation (Sumetri et al., 2022).

Despite the community's pivotal role in tourism development, several challenges hinder the full participation of Pangandaran's residents. Inadequate infrastructure, limited access to training and financial resources, and conflicts between conservation efforts and local livelihoods are key obstacles that must be addressed to promote sustainable tourism development. Strengthening the involvement of local communities in the outdoor recreation sector not only enhances economic growth but also ensures that tourism development aligns with the cultural and environmental values of the region. This article seeks to analyze the mechanisms through which community involvement in outdoor recreation businesses can be strengthened. It will examine how local communities can be

better supported through infrastructure improvements, training programs, and access to financial resources. By highlighting successful community-based tourism models, this research aims to demonstrate how local entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism practices can coexist, benefiting both the local economy and Pangandaran's natural environment.

## **METHODS**

This research adopts a qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to analyze community empowerment in sustainable outdoor recreation within the Pangandaran tourist destination. The study aims to explore the mechanisms through which community involvement in outdoor recreation businesses can be strengthened. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and field observations with key stakeholders, including local community members, business owners, government officials, and tourism industry representatives. This research also uses library research to support data searches in documents, books, articles, reports, and government publications.

The interviews were conducted with 15 community members directly involved in outdoor recreation businesses, such as tour guides, boat operators, and local outdoor activity providers. In addition, 5 local government officials from the tourism department and 4 tourism business owners were also interviewed to gain insights into the policies and business practices that affect community participation. Field observations were conducted in various outdoor recreational sites, such as beaches, hiking trails, and camping areas, to gather contextual data on how community members interact with tourists and manage their businesses.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, where emerging patterns related to community empowerment, business challenges, and sustainable practices were identified. The analysis aimed to understand the current level of community engagement and explore strategies to enhance their role in sustainable tourism development. By employing a qualitative methodology, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of community empowerment and offers recommendations for strengthening community involvement in outdoor recreation in Pangandaran.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Forms of Community Involvement in Tourism**

The research identified that Pangandaran Regency has a total of 270 tourist attractions. These attractions are categorized into three main types: cultural, man-made, and natural. The data reveals that 27% of the attractions are cultural, focusing on the local heritage and traditions of the community. 9% are man-made attractions, which include recreational facilities and other artificial tourist spots. The largest proportion, 64%, comprises natural attractions, emphasizing the region's rich environmental and ecological offerings, such as beaches, mountains, and forests. Tourist attractions in Pangandaran Regency are distributed across 10 sub-districts, with Parigi being the area with the highest concentration, hosting 63 tourist attractions. This data highlights the significance of Parigi as a central hub for tourism in the region, indicating potential for further development and enhanced tourism management. The distribution of attractions suggests the need for targeted infrastructure and marketing strategies to ensure balanced development across all sub-districts and to support sustainable tourism growth in Pangandaran. These findings underline the diversity and richness of Pangandaran's tourism assets, particularly in the natural sector, offering significant opportunities for eco-tourism and outdoor recreation

initiatives. The high concentration of attractions in certain areas, such as Parigi, suggests potential crowding issues that must be addressed through appropriate planning and visitor management strategies.

**Table 1. Popular Tourist Destinations Based on Google Maps Comments**

No	Sites	Ratings	Comments
1	Pangandaran Beach	4,6	15.402
No	Sites	Ratings	Comments
2	Pangandaran Sunset Park	4,7	8.011
3	Green Canyon Pangandaran	4,6	7.972
4	East Coast of Pangandaran	4,7	7.522
5	Madasari Beach	4,7	6.415
6	Pantai Barat Pangandaran	4,6	5.631
8	Karapyak White Sand Beach	4,5	4.337
9	Pangandaran White Sand Beach	4,5	3.948
10	Batu Karas Surf Spot	4,6	2.764
11	Batu Hiu Beach	4,5	2.082
12	Citumang Body Rafting	4,8	2.044
13	Aquarium Indonesia Pangandaran	4,2	1.568
14	Pangandaran Nature Reserve	4,4	1.249

Source: Research data, 2024

The data on restaurant growth in Pangandaran Regency between 2020 and 2023 shows a significant increase, particularly in the last year. From 2020 to 2022, restaurants remained stable at 211 units. However, by 2023, this number rose to 283 units, reflecting a 34.1% increase in restaurant establishments within a year. This sudden growth suggests a positive response to the region's increasing tourism demand, indicating a trend of business expansion in the food and beverage sector. In parallel, the number of micro-enterprises in Pangandaran Regency also experienced rapid growth from 2020 to 2022 (Dinas Koperasi, Usaha Kecil dan Menengah, 2024). In 2020, there were 11,419 micro-enterprises, surging to 93,921 units in 2021, followed by a slight increase to 98,290 units in 2022, remaining stable through 2023. This drastic growth in micro-enterprises from 2020 to 2021 represents an over 700% increase, suggesting strong regional entrepreneurial activity, likely driven by government initiatives or economic recovery efforts post-pandemic.

The stability in the number of micro-enterprises from 2022 onwards indicates a plateau, which could reflect a saturation of new business creation or shifts in market dynamics. Together, these trends highlight the evolving landscape of small business and restaurant growth in Pangandaran, pointing to an expanding local economy becoming increasingly intertwined with the tourism industry. This growth in both sectors suggests that Pangandaran is positioning itself as an attractive destination for entrepreneurs and investors, particularly in tourism-related industries.

The involvement of the local community in tourism-related professional and business associations in Pangandaran Regency reflects a broad and diverse participation across different sectors. According to data from (Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Kabupaten Pangandaran, 2022), the distribution of community members actively engaged in tourism institutions is as follows:

**Table 2. Community Members In Pangandaran Tourism Organization**

<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Members</b>
Hotel Association	274 members
Guesthouse (Pondok Wisata)	158 members
KWAP (Watersport Association)	10 members
Green Canyon Tourism Boat Association	80 members
P2RWP (Cycling Tourism Association)	310 members
OKWP (Tourism Horse Riding Association)	65 members
TP3 (Tourism Boat Association)	150 members
Restaurants/Cafés	211 members
ASITA (Association of Indonesian Travel Agents)	6 members
HPI (Indonesian Tourist Guide Association)	126 members

(Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Kabupaten Pangandaran, 2022)

This data shows significant community participation in cycling tourism, with P2RWP having the largest membership at 310 people, suggesting a growing trend in cycling tourism activities in the region. The hotel and restaurant sectors also feature considerable involvement, with 274 and 211 members, respectively, indicating the importance of these sectors in supporting tourism infrastructure. While some associations, like ASITA and KWAP, have relatively few members, it highlights niche areas such as travel agency services and watersports that may benefit from further development and capacity building. Overall, the data illustrates that the community in Pangandaran is actively involved in various tourism-related organizations, reflecting a well-established network of professional and business associations. This participation is vital for promoting tourism activities and ensuring that local stakeholders play a central role in the growth and sustainability of the tourism industry in Pangandaran.

Community involvement in outdoor recreation in Pangandaran is prominently reflected in various initiatives that enhance the region's tourism offerings. One significant aspect is the active participation of residents in developing rental services for recreational vehicles, including boats, bicycles, and motorbikes/ATVs. This initiative is particularly evident in the bustling Pangandaran Beach area, which has become a mass tourism destination. By providing accessible rental options, the community plays a crucial role in facilitating tourist experiences and contributing to the local economy. Additionally, expanding watersport activities on the East Beach of Pangandaran is a complementary attraction, enriching the region's overall tourism product. This development not only diversifies the tourism options available but also helps balance the high visitor traffic typically found on the West side of the beach, fostering a more evenly distributed tourist experience throughout the area.

The community's engagement extends to managing adventure tourism activities such as body rafting in popular locations like Citumang, Green Canyon, Santirah, and Ciwayang. Both core and supporting businesses have emerged in response to this growing trend, establishing these sites as premier family adventure tourism products. The local population's involvement in these activities enhances their economic sustainability and promotes environmental awareness among visitors. Furthermore, the provision of camping services at Madasari Beach has become a notable offering, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in nature while enjoying outdoor experiences. This initiative reflects the community's adaptability in catering to diverse tourist preferences and increasing the region's appeal as an outdoor recreation destination.

Supporting services, such as outdoor tour operators and providers of forest exploration and camping activities in various forested and coastal areas, illustrate the

community's active participation in outdoor recreation. These services enhance the tourist experience and create job opportunities for residents, fostering economic empowerment. Finally, the supply of logistics and equipment for outdoor recreational activities underscores the community's commitment to sustaining and enhancing outdoor tourism. Local businesses contribute to a robust infrastructure supporting tourists and the local economy by providing essential resources for these activities. These findings highlight the essential role of community involvement in promoting sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran, showcasing how local initiatives can enrich the tourism landscape while fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship.

### **Level of Engagement in Sustainable Outdoor Recreation**

The level of community engagement in tourism development in Pangandaran exhibits significant variability, with certain groups demonstrating higher activity levels than others. Many residents strongly desire to participate in decision-making processes related to tourism initiatives; however, empirical observations indicate that actual participation is often confined to limited forums, such as village meetings and local community events. Many community members feel their input is not adequately considered during formal tourism planning sessions, highlighting a noticeable gap between expressed interest and active involvement.

Many of the community engages in tourism-related economic activities, including providing accommodations, guiding tours, and selling local handicrafts. Tourism is a vital component of the local economy, with numerous households relying on income generated from these activities. Despite this economic dependence, significant challenges remain concerning service quality. Many local businesses lack access to formal training programs, which hinders their ability to meet the expectations of an increasingly discerning tourist demographic. This gap underscores the urgent need for targeted training and support initiatives to enhance service quality and promote sustainable practices.

Furthermore, community members participating in educational and training programs related to tourism often demonstrate a heightened understanding of sustainable tourism benefits. Recent workshop participants have reported noticeable improvements in their knowledge of eco-friendly tourism and community-based conservation efforts. However, a substantial number of residents remain unaware of the specific opportunities and challenges associated with sustainable tourism development, which restricts their ability to engage effectively in initiatives that could enhance their livelihoods and contribute to the sustainability of the local tourism sector.

In terms of sustainable practices, the community has initiated several efforts, including developing ecotourism packages that showcase the area's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. These packages attract tourists and actively involve community members in managing local resources, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility toward environmental conservation. Local initiatives aimed at producing and selling handicrafts and traditional foods made from locally sourced materials contribute positively to community income while preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

Comprehensive training on sustainable tourism practices is essential to enhance these initiatives further. Community members would greatly benefit from education on effective waste management, natural resource conservation techniques, and strategies for marketing local products, empowering them to improve their services and adapt to the evolving demands of the tourism market. Strong collaboration among the community, government, and private sectors is crucial for developing effective programs that support sustainable tourism development. This partnership can mobilize resources, share best practices, and create frameworks for sustainable practices that benefit all stakeholders. By

prioritizing these areas, Pangandaran can cultivate a more inclusive and sustainable tourism ecosystem that delivers economic benefits while reinforcing the local cultural identity.

To conclude this section, based on field findings, six distinct levels of community involvement in sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran have been identified: 1) Non-involvement, 2) Informative, 3) Consultative, 4) Active Participation; 5) Empowerment, and 6) Sustainable Engagement, as illustrated in Figure 1.

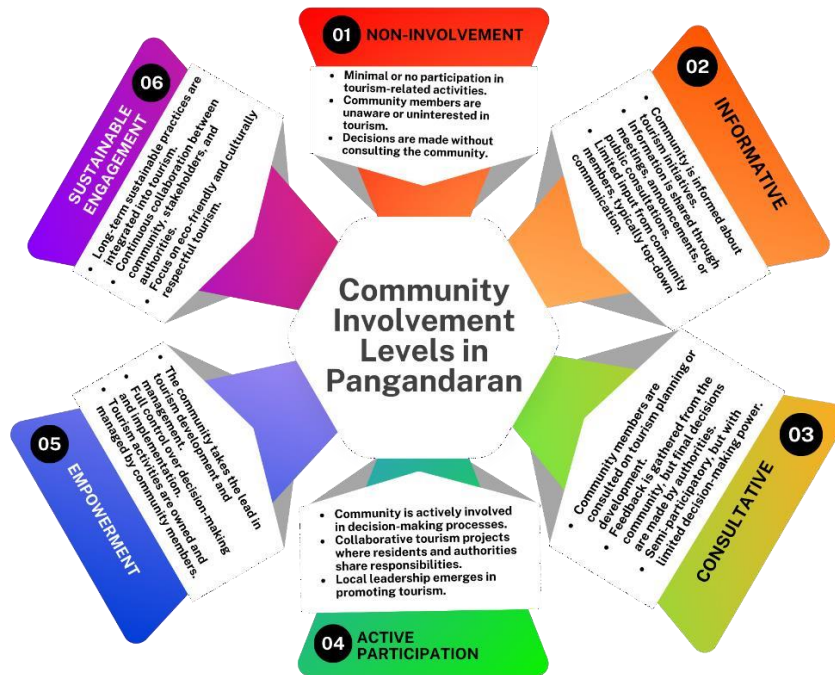


Figure 1. Community Involvement Levels in Pangandaran

Source: Research data, 2024

Each level represents a progressive increase in the community's role and influence in tourism development. At the Non-involvement stage, the community plays no active role in tourism activities, with decisions being made by external parties without community input. As the level increases to Informative, the community becomes aware of tourism initiatives, though they still passively receive information from stakeholders without direct involvement in decision-making. In the Consultative stage, the community is given opportunities to provide feedback and opinions, although their input may not be fully integrated into the final decisions. Moving towards Active Participation, the community starts to share responsibility with external stakeholders, playing a collaborative role in tourism projects and actively engaging in planning and implementation. The Empowerment level signifies a major shift as the community takes full control over tourism development and management. Here, residents lead tourism activities, making key decisions directly affecting their environment and livelihood. Finally, at the Sustainable Engagement level, the community leads tourism initiatives and integrates long-term sustainability practices, ensuring that tourism activities support environmental conservation and cultural preservation, aligning with the principles of eco-tourism and responsible travel.

### **Engagement Challenges**

The challenges of community empowerment in sustainable outdoor recreation in the Pangandaran tourist destination can be identified through various dimensions: First, Infrastructure Development. A major challenge facing community empowerment in sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran is the issue of infrastructure development, particularly in accommodating the high volume of tourists during peak seasons. The West Beach of Pangandaran, as a primary mass tourism destination, often experiences overtourism, resulting in overcrowding and strain on local facilities such as parking areas, restrooms, and waste management systems. This excessive concentration of tourists diminishes the overall visitor experience and exacerbates the environmental pressure on the area. The challenge is compounded by limited infrastructure in alternative destinations within Pangandaran Regency, which hinders the effective dispersion of tourist movement to less crowded areas. As a result, the region struggles with managing tourism flows, leading to potential overuse of the main attractions and underutilization of other sites.

Second, Environmental sustainability remains a critical challenge for community empowerment in outdoor recreation within Pangandaran. One of the most pressing issues is the management of waste and pollution, exacerbated by the behaviour of mass tourists and a lack of discipline among residents and business operators. Unfortunately, the influx of visitors often leads to littering and improper waste disposal, further straining the local ecosystem. This situation is compounded by the inadequate provision of modern waste processing facilities in Pangandaran, limiting the community's ability to manage waste effectively. Without appropriate infrastructure to handle solid waste and wastewater, the area's natural beauty is at risk of degradation. To combat these challenges, it is crucial to implement comprehensive waste management strategies, including education campaigns to raise awareness among tourists and locals about responsible waste disposal practices. Additionally, establishing modern waste processing facilities is essential to ensure that tourism and local activities can be conducted sustainably, protecting the environment and enhancing the overall tourist experience in Pangandaran.

Third, community engagement in sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran faces several challenges that hinder active participation and collaboration among residents. One significant barrier is the lack of awareness regarding the benefits of sustainable tourism practices, which can result in limited involvement from community members. Many locals may not fully understand how their participation can enhance tourism's economic and environmental aspects in their region. Moreover, conflicting interests among community members regarding land use and resource management can create divisions, preventing a unified approach to tourism development. These conflicts may arise from differing priorities, where some residents prioritize immediate economic gains while others focus on long-term environmental sustainability. Fulfilling an inclusive dialogue that encourages all stakeholders to voice their concerns and aspirations is essential to address these challenges. Community workshops and participatory planning sessions can help educate residents about sustainable practices and demonstrate the potential benefits of their involvement. By promoting shared responsibility and collaboration, the local community can better align their interests and work together towards a sustainable outdoor recreation model that benefits everyone in Pangandaran.

Fourth, Economic factors present a significant challenge to community empowerment in sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran. Limited financial resources and investment opportunities hinder developing and maintaining tourism-related infrastructure and services essential for promoting sustainable practices. Many local businesses struggle to secure funding for improvements or expansions, which can



stifle innovation and the growth of sustainable tourism initiatives. Additionally, income disparities among community members can exacerbate the situation, as not all residents benefit equally from the tourism economy. This inequitable distribution of resources may lead to resentment and a lack of motivation for those who feel excluded from the economic benefits of tourism. To overcome these challenges, it is vital to create targeted financial support mechanisms, such as grants, low-interest loans, or public-private partnerships, to empower local entrepreneurs to invest in sustainable practices. Furthermore, promoting community-based tourism initiatives can help ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are distributed more evenly among residents. By addressing these economic challenges, Pangandaran can cultivate a more inclusive and sustainable outdoor recreation economy that uplifts the entire community while preserving its natural and cultural resources.

Fifth, regulatory and policy challenges significantly impact community empowerment in sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran. The absence of clear, consistent regulations governing tourism activities can lead to the over-exploitation of natural resources, threatening both the environment and the sustainability of tourism itself. Many local stakeholders may be unaware of existing regulations or how to comply, resulting in inadequate enforcement and a lack of accountability. Furthermore, the fragmentation of responsibilities among various government agencies can create confusion regarding who manages tourism and environmental protection. This lack of coordination can hinder effective policy implementation and limit the community's ability to engage in sustainable practices. To address these challenges, developing comprehensive, well-coordinated policies that clearly define roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders involved in tourism management is essential. Engaging the community in the policymaking process can also foster a sense of ownership and accountability, encouraging residents to adhere to regulations and actively participate in sustainable initiatives. By establishing a robust regulatory framework supporting sustainable tourism practices, Pangandaran can create a more resilient tourism sector that benefits the community and the environment.

Sixth, seasonality and demand fluctuations present a significant challenge to community empowerment in sustainable outdoor recreation in Pangandaran. Inconsistent visitor numbers throughout the year can create instability for local businesses and hinder community engagement in tourism activities. During peak seasons, the influx of tourists may overwhelm local resources, leading to overcrowding and a strain on infrastructure. Conversely, off-peak periods often result in decreased revenue for businesses, making it difficult for them to sustain operations and retain staff. This cyclical nature of tourism can lead to a reliance on short-term strategies to attract visitors, which may not prioritize sustainability or community involvement.

Moreover, the fluctuations in demand can create uncertainty for local stakeholders, making it challenging to plan long-term investments in sustainable practices or infrastructure development. To address these challenges, it is essential to implement strategies that promote year-round tourism, such as diversifying tourism offerings and developing unique experiences that appeal to different demographics. Marketing campaigns targeting specific audiences during the off-peak season can also help maintain visitor interest and engagement. By creating a more stable and consistent flow of visitors, the community can enhance its resilience against the adverse effects of seasonality, ensuring that local businesses thrive while fostering sustainable outdoor recreation practices throughout the year.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this research highlight the diverse forms of community involvement in tourism within Pangandaran Regency, showcasing its potential for sustainable development. With 270 tourist attractions categorized into cultural, man-made, and natural types, the region's rich tourism assets, particularly natural attractions, present significant opportunities for eco-tourism and outdoor recreation initiatives. The distribution of these attractions, especially in the Parigi sub-district, emphasizes the need for targeted infrastructure and marketing strategies to promote balanced tourism growth across all areas while addressing potential crowding issues.

The substantial increase in restaurants and micro-enterprises further illustrates the evolving landscape of tourism-related economic activities in Pangandaran, suggesting a strong interconnection between the local economy and the tourism industry. The active participation of the community in various tourism organizations demonstrates a well-established network that is essential for promoting tourism activities and ensuring that local stakeholders play a crucial role in the growth and sustainability of the sector.

However, significant challenges remain regarding infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and community engagement. Overcrowding during peak seasons strains local facilities and creates environmental pressures that necessitate comprehensive management strategies. Additionally, the lack of awareness regarding sustainable tourism practices among residents hampers effective participation. To foster a more sustainable tourism ecosystem, it is vital to enhance community education on eco-friendly practices and establish frameworks for collaboration among stakeholders.

Ultimately, by addressing these challenges and leveraging the strengths of community involvement, Pangandaran can cultivate a tourism landscape that generates economic benefits and preserves and celebrates its rich cultural and natural heritage. Promoting sustainable practices and fostering a sense of shared responsibility among residents will ensure tourism's long-term viability and success in the region.

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