



## **STUDY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT AGROTOURISM IN SEMBALUN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

government support, and collaboration with the private sector. However, obstacles such as a lack of understanding of tourism management, limited promotion, and access to capital and technology are still challenges. Tourism potential such as strawberry picking, educational coffee and garlic tourism, as well as preserving traditional agricultural methods is considered very promising. The success of agrotourism is not only determined by the number of visitors, but also the quality of the experience provided. Therefore, the development of agrotourism in Sembalun needs to be carried out through product diversification, service improvement, digital promotion, empowerment of MSMEs, environmental preservation, and cross-sector collaboration to create inclusive and sustainable tourism.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Agrotourism in Indonesia is growing rapidly along with increasing tourist interest in nature-based experiences and education, utilizing biological riches, agricultural culture and natural beauty as the main attractions. Government support through sustainable tourism policies, training, and collaboration with the community and private sector has helped accelerate the growth of this sector. Local communities, especially farmers, are now directly involved in agrotourism activities such as opening homestays, providing garden tours, and selling local products, which not only increases their income but also strengthens the rural economy. Technology and social media also make it easier to promote new agritourism destinations. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure and lack of tourism management skills are still obstacles that need to be overcome. Sembalun, a strategic area in East Lombok with charming landscapes and fertile soil due to volcanic activity, holds great potential as an agrotourism destination based on horticultural farming such as garlic, strawberries and apples. As the entrance to Mount Rinjani, Sembalun also attracts climbing tourists, and its cultural richness such as traditional ceremonies and traditional dances is an added value in the development of agrotourism that combines agriculture, recreation and education. Agrotourism not only brings tourists together with nature and agricultural products, but also introduces them to local life and culture directly, creating an authentic and immersive tourism experience. Various definitions of agrotourism, both from government policies and academics, emphasize that this activity is a combination of farming, tourism, education and preserving local culture.

Therefore, developing agrotourism in Sembalun is an important strategy in improving the regional economy in a sustainable manner, by involving local communities in every stage of planning to evaluation, while preserving culture and the environment. The involvement of communities with local knowledge is very important to create authentic agrotourism, but requires training so that they are ready to face the dynamics of the modern tourism industry. The government, private sector and society must work together in providing infrastructure, service innovation and supporting marketing. Amid the global sustainable tourism trend, agrotourism is a relevant option because it offers educational experiences, is environmentally friendly and supports the local economy. Therefore, it is important to examine in depth the role of the community in developing agrotourism in Sembalun so that the development strategy

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implemented is truly based on local potential, inclusive, and able to improve the welfare of the community as a whole.

### Previous Research

Previous research is an important reference in supporting this study. One of them is research by Salmah, Yuniarti, and Handayani (2021) which examines community participation in agrotourism development in Gangga District, North Lombok. The results show that community involvement is greater at the implementation stage compared to planning and supervision, such as providing homestays and cultivating organic melons as a tourist attraction. Other research by Triana et al. (2023) studied the agrotourism potential of Sajang Village, Sembalun District. This research concludes that the potential for agrotourism is quite large, but is hampered by facilities and minimal village government support. Septiana (2023) researched the Sembalun Tourism Village development strategy, which includes facility planning, community involvement and tourist activities, but is faced with limited human resources and community knowledge. Meanwhile, Komariah et al. (2019) focused on promotional strategies for Agro Tourism Villages in Paledah Village, Pangandaran, which emphasized the importance of improving management skills in designing marketing strategies such as product identification, pricing and promotion. All of this research provides an important picture regarding the potential, challenges and strategies for developing community-based agrotourism.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Tourist

Tourism is a traveling activity carried out by a person or group from their place of origin to another place for a temporary period, for the purposes of recreation, education, health, business or other interests. During the trip, tourists enjoy new experiences from the cultural, natural and social aspects of the places visited.

According to Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, tourism includes all tourism activities that are supported by facilities and services from the community, business actors and the government. The main goal is to encourage economic growth, improve people's welfare, preserve nature and culture, and strengthen national identity. Prof. Hunziker and Krapf (in Oka A. Yoeti, 2002: 8) define tourism as "all the symptoms that arise from someone traveling and staying outside their place of residence, as long as they do not stay permanently and do not work to earn income in that place." Meanwhile, according to Prof. Salah Wahab (in Yoeti, 2002 and Sentana N. et al., 2023) tourism is "a human activity that is carried out consciously and receives services alternately, both at home and abroad, to achieve satisfaction and experiences that are different from everyday life."

From these various opinions, it can be concluded that tourism has main characteristics, namely:

- a. temporary activities,
- b. provide experience and entertainment,
- c. involves social and economic interactions,
- d. encourage development and conservation, as well
- e. requires ongoing management.

Thus, tourism not only provides pleasure for tourists, but also provides economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits for local communities and regional development.

### Agrotourism

Agrotourism is a tourist activity that utilizes the agricultural sector as the main object for educational, recreational and economic purposes. According to Nurisjah (2001) in Budiarti (2013), agrotourism is a series tourist trips that utilize land or the agricultural sector from the production process to the final results, with the aim of expanding knowledge, understanding, experience and providing entertainment in the agricultural sector. Agrotourism not only offers agricultural views, but also invites tourists to be directly involved in activities such as farming, fruit picking, or getting to know local agricultural technology. Apart from being recreational, this activity provides economic benefits for farmers and supports cultural and environmental preservation. Utama (2011) emphasized that through agrotourism, farmers can increase their income while maintaining local wisdom and preserving land resources. Agrotourism is also included in the form of **ecotourism**, namely tourism that is environmentally friendly and aims to provide understanding and appreciation of nature and culture.

#### 1. Types of Agrotourism

- Natural open space agrotourism, namely tourism that takes place directly on farmers' agricultural land. - Artificial open space agrotourism, namely agricultural areas specifically designed for tourism, even though they are not yet managed by local communities.

#### 2. Characteristics of Agrotourism

- a. The majority of the population is engaged in agriculture or agribusiness.
- b. Have a complete farming system (crops, livestock, plantations, forestry).
- c. Supported by supporting services such as transportation, education, technology and government policies. - Has local uniqueness that can be developed as a tourist attraction.

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- d. There is a close connection between rural and urban areas in supporting farming and agribusiness. c. Benefits of Agrotourism

Agrotourism has a positive impact in the form of increasing people's income, preserving the environment, creating jobs, and strengthening the village economy. Apart from that, it can reduce the flow of urbanization and increase public awareness of the importance of maintaining agricultural sustainability.

#### **Tourism Village**

A tourist village is a rural area that has the potential to be developed as a cultural and nature-based tourist destination without changing the authenticity of the village. Fandeli (2002) states that a tourist village is an area that reflects the authenticity of village community life in terms of culture, daily activities, customs, and even the architecture of buildings that become a tourist attraction.

According to Nuryanti (1993), a tourist village is an integration of attractions, accommodation and supporting facilities in the life of the local community, where tourists can participate directly in traditional activities such as dancing, painting or learning regional languages. Tourist villages not only provide recreational facilities, but also support cultural preservation and improvement of the local economy.

1. Tourism Village Criteria
  - a. Has unique natural and cultural attractions.
  - b. Tourist support facilities are available.
  - c. There is direct interaction with tourists.
  - d. Supported by active community participation
2. Tourism Village Development

The development of tourist villages must involve local communities as the main actors through a community based tourism approach. The aim is to strengthen local potential, preserve culture and create jobs. Soemarno (2010) states that important strategies in developing tourist villages include: - Improving the quality of human resources through training and education.

- a. Partnership with tourism industry players.
- b. Strengthening local organizations and tourism promotion.
- c. Organizing village events such as festivals and competitions.
- d. Development of community enterprises to support village economic independence.
- e. Tourist villages are a sustainable tourism solution that pays attention to economic, social and environmental conservation aspects in a balanced way.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

The activities carried out at the research planning stage were searching for information from various sources, such as research journals related to agrotourism and tourism villages, which then found research gaps. Based on the research gaps found, related objects and subjects are identified to see phenomena occurring in the field through initial observations which can be used as a basis for raising problems as a focus in the research plan, which can then be used as a research framework.

The sampling technique or selection of informants was carried out using the Purposive Sampling technique, namely a technique for collecting data sources with certain considerations. The consideration criteria were determined because the informant had in-depth knowledge and understanding of agrotourism in Sembalun and understood it in detail. Apart from that, the informants were actively involved in planning tourism development programs and activities in the Sembalun area, as well as visitors/tourists who traveled to the Sembalun area.

The informants for this research are the Secretary of the Village Head, Tourism Awareness Group, Community Figures, MSMEs, and Visitors/Tourists. The next step is to classify and analyze the data according to the data analysis methods categorized by Miles & Huberman (1984), namely data reduction, data presentation, verification and drawing conclusions. In the process of drawing conclusions, we can use tools in the form of tables to group data findings into topics, themes and subthemes, categories and conclusions.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **The level of involvement of local communities, especially farmers, in the agrotourism development process in Sembalun**

The development of agrotourism in Sembalun has become a very important part of efforts to improve the welfare of local communities and strengthen the regional identity as an agricultural-based tourism destination. Agrotourism not only offers a different tourism experience for visitors, but also has a significant economic and social impact on local communities, especially farmers. The involvement of farmers in the management and development of

agrotourism is a key factor in the sustainability of this sector. According to research by Susilowati (2016), the concept of community-based tourism (Community-Based Tourism) emphasizes that local communities must play an active role in managing, developing and benefiting from the tourism sector. This principle is relevant in the context of Sembalun agrotourism, where the community, especially farmers, are the main actors in providing tourism services such as educational gardens, fruit picking, and processing agricultural products into value-added products.

Based on interviews conducted by previous researchers with the Sembalun Village Secretary, the local community is aware of the potential of agrotourism as a solution to improve the economy and preserve culture and the environment. However, the main challenges faced are the community's low understanding of professional tourism management and limited supporting infrastructure. This is in line with research by Pitana & Diarta (2009) which states that the success of a community-based tourism destination is very dependent on the community's capacity to manage and develop their tourism potential. The level of community involvement in agrotourism in Sembalun can be categorized into several forms. First, direct participation involving farmers in providing tourism services such as homestays, tour guides, and selling local products such as honey and coffee. Second, indirect participation through the provision of agricultural products that support the local culinary industry. Third, participation in decision making, where the community participates in planning and developing agrotourism programs together with the village government and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis).

Even though community involvement has begun to increase, there are several obstacles that need attention. First, limited access to information and training for farmers in managing tourism-based businesses. Second, the lack of promotion has caused many tourists to only know strawberries as an icon of Sembalun agrotourism, while other commodities have not received the same attention. This is reinforced by the statement of Hamid, a local farmer, who said that tourists generally only look for strawberries and are less aware of other agricultural potential in Sembalun. Third, limited infrastructure such as adequate roads and public facilities is also a major obstacle in attracting more tourists. According to Setiawan (2017), sustainable agrotourism development must be supported by cooperation between the community, government and the private sector. In the Sembalun context, this effort has begun with a tourism management training program, development of supporting facilities, and collaboration with external parties to increase the competitiveness of agrotourism at the national and international levels. One solution that can be implemented is diversification of agrotourism products. Research by Wulandari et al. (2020) show that diversification of agrotourism products can increase attractiveness for tourists and provide broader economic benefits for local communities. In Sembalun, this can be done by introducing the concept of agricultural educational tourism, processing agricultural products, and developing more varied tour packages.

Apart from that, digital-based marketing strategies also need to be strengthened. A study by Wahyuni (2019) revealed that the use of social media and digital platforms can increase the visibility of tourist destinations and attract more tourists. In this case, promotion via social media can help educate tourists about various agricultural potentials in Sembalun besides strawberries.

In conclusion, the involvement of local communities, especially farmers, in the development of agrotourism in Sembalun has a very important role in ensuring the sustainability of this sector. Even though there has been an increase in community involvement, there are still obstacles such as a lack of understanding of agrotourism management, limited infrastructure, and a lack of promotion that need to be overcome. Therefore, collaboration between government, society and the private sector is key in optimizing Sembalun's agrotourism potential, so that it can provide wider economic, social and environmental benefits. With the right approach, Sembalun can develop into a leading agrotourism destination that is known nationally and internationally.

#### **Factors that support and hinder community involvement in agrotourism development in Sembalun?**

The development of agrotourism in Sembalun has become an important part of efforts to improve the economic welfare of local communities and introduce the potential of agriculture as a tourist attraction. The community, especially farmers, has a central role in running and developing this sector. However, their involvement is influenced by various factors that can support or hinder their active participation in agrotourism management.

##### **1. Supporting Factors**

One of the main factors that supports community involvement is awareness of the economic potential resulting from agrotourism. According to Susilowati (2016), people who understand the economic benefits of their involvement in tourism tend to participate more actively. Farmers in Sembalun are starting to see agrotourism as an opportunity to increase income through various activities such as providing homestays, agricultural educational tours, and selling harvests directly to tourists. Support from local governments and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) also plays a role in strengthening community involvement by providing training and technical assistance.

Another supporting factor is the diversity of agricultural products which are the main attraction for tourists. The natural beauty of Sembalun, surrounded by mountains and fertile agricultural land, offers a unique experience for visitors. Setiawan (2017) stated that destinations that have a combination of attractive natural landscapes and



agricultural-based activities have greater potential to attract tourists. The diversity of agricultural products such as strawberries, garlic, apples and organic vegetables is capital that can be developed further as part of educational tourism packages.

## 2. Inhibiting Factors

Factors that hinder community involvement in the development of agrotourism in Sembalun. One of the main obstacles is the lack of understanding and skills in tourism management. Many farmers do not have sufficient knowledge regarding the concept of sustainable tourism management. Pitana & Diarta (2009) emphasize that the lack of education and training in the tourism sector can be a major obstacle in developing community-based tourism destinations. This also happens in Sembalun, where many farmers still need training regarding tourism services, marketing strategies, and diversification of agrotourism products to make them more attractive to tourists. Infrastructure limitations are also a significant inhibiting factor. Road access to several tourist locations is still inadequate, as are public facilities such as toilets, rest areas, and transportation facilities that support the smooth flow of tourist visits. Wulandari et al. (2020) stated that poor infrastructure can reduce tourist comfort and reduce the attractiveness of tourist destinations. Therefore, improving infrastructure is one of the urgent needs in developing agrotourism in Sembalun.

Apart from that, the lack of promotion is an obstacle that means the agrotourism potential in Sembalun is not yet widely known. Many tourists only know Sembalun as a mountain tourism destination and do not yet know its comprehensive agrotourism potential. Wahyuni (2019) emphasized that digital marketing strategies can increase the visibility of a tourist destination and attract more visitors. In the Sembalun context, the use of social media, websites and digital marketing platforms can help introduce various tourism products and experiences offered by the local community. Social and cultural aspects also influence community involvement in agrotourism. Some people still have a conservative view of the economic changes brought by the tourism sector. Some farmers are more comfortable with traditional farming systems and are less interested in adopting the agrotourism concept. Raharjo et al. (2018) revealed that social change in agricultural-based communities often faces resistance due to concerns about changes in culture and lifestyle. Therefore, an education-based approach and effective communication are needed to increase public understanding of the long-term benefits of involvement in the agritourism sector

Agrotourism potential that can be optimized to strengthen tourist attractions in Sembalun Sembalun has agrotourism potential which can be optimized to strengthen tourist attractions, especially through horticultural farming such as garlic, strawberries, coffee and organic vegetables. Tourists can be directly involved in agricultural activities, such as planting, harvesting and processing agricultural produce into value-added products. Apart from that, the beauty of the hilly landscape and rice fields is the main attraction that can be developed with the concept of educational and adventure tourism. Agricultural and culinary festivals based on local produce can also be an attractive promotional strategy. With this optimization, Sembalun can be increasingly recognized as a leading agrotourism destination.

### Agrotourism as a Tourism Identity in the Sembalun Area

Sembalun Village has great potential in developing sustainable agrotourism which can improve the community's economy, preserve the environment and strengthen local culture. Based on the results of interviews with village secretaries, business people and tourists, agrotourism in Sembalun has not been managed optimally even though it has abundant natural resources. The main obstacles faced include low public understanding of agrotourism, limited infrastructure, and a lack of effective promotion.

According to Hrymak et al. (2019), the success of agrotourism is largely determined by the quality of community education, adequate infrastructure and good marketing strategies. This is confirmed by Postevoy et al. (2020) which states that agrotourism can increase farmers' income and the local economy if managed participatively.

In Sembalun, several community initiatives have begun to appear, such as providing homestays, selling local products (coffee, strawberries, garlic), and guiding tours. However, low management capacity is a serious challenge. Pashkov & Mazhitova (2021) emphasize the importance of training and education to increase the professionalism of tourism services and management. The village government's steps in organizing agrotourism management training are the right initial strategy. Infrastructure is also an important concern. Limited access roads and public facilities make this destination less competitive. Research by Kalinina et al. (2024) in Russia shows that limited accessibility can reduce tourists' interest in visiting. Therefore, cooperation between the government, private sector and society is urgently needed to strengthen physical and digital infrastructure.

The promotional aspect is also still minimal. The majority of tourists only know strawberries as the icon of Sembalun, even though there are other potential commodities. Sekar et al. (2023) shows that incomplete promotion is the main cause of low exposure to the potential of tourist villages. Strategies such as educational tourism, local product branding and digital promotions are considered important to raise all agricultural potential in Sembalun.

Globally, agrotourism has become a tool to encourage rural economic diversification. The One Village, One



Product program in Kazakhstan, for example, succeeded in increasing village income through the promotion of typical products (Sarina et al., 2024). A similar model could be adapted in Sembalun, focusing on superior products such as garlic and apples. Finally, from a sustainability perspective, agritourism can help maintain ecosystem balance. Hazuda et al. (2023) stated that environmental preservation can go hand in hand with tourism activities if there is education and community participation. Therefore, the development of agrotourism in Sembalun needs to integrate economic, social and ecological aspects in a balanced way so that it becomes a leading, sustainable destination.

### **The Role of Agrotourism in Increasing Tourist Attraction**

Agrotourism is a form of tourism that combines agricultural activities with recreation and education. In Sembalun Village, agrotourism has great potential because of its natural beauty and diverse agricultural products, such as strawberries, coffee and garlic. Tourists can participate in picking fruit, learn to plant, and taste the harvest. This provides a different experience from regular tourism.

According to Hrymak et al. (2019), agrotourism can strengthen the relationship between tourists and nature and local culture, as well as help the village economy develop. In Sembalun, many farmers and small businesses are starting to earn additional income from tourist tickets, selling agricultural products and homestay services. This is also evident in Nigeria, where agrotourism helps create jobs and reduce urbanization (Olagunju, 2024).

#### **a. Agrotourism as Educational Tourism**

Agrotourism is not only a place to vacation, but also a place to learn. School children and students can learn farming techniques directly, both traditional and modern. This has proven effective in increasing their understanding of the world of agriculture (Ristea et al., 2019).

However, the challenge is that many tourists only know strawberries as the main produce of Sembalun. In fact, there is still coffee, organic vegetables and others. Lack of promotion means tourists don't know about other potentials. A similar problem also occurs in Malaysia (Man & Aspany, 2020). In addition, agrotourism can encourage friendly agriculture environment. For example, by teaching tourists about soil and water conservation. In India, this approach has been proven to help the environment and the economy of farmers (Gowdhaman et al., 2024). Another challenge is infrastructure and access. Many tourists have difficulty coming because there is a lack of information and the roads are not good. Research in Bantaeng shows that infrastructure, community training and promotion are very important to support agrotourism (Sulmiah et al., 2024). Digital promotion and collaboration with tourism agents are also important to build the image of tourist villages. For example, in Yogyakarta, well-developed agrotourism can strengthen village identity and attract more visitors (Roels, 2020).

#### **b. Agrotourism Shapes the Image of Tourist Villages**

Agrotourism helps shape the village's image as an authentic, natural and community-based tourist destination. In Sembalun, residents participate as tour guides, homestay owners and sellers of local products. This strengthens the role of the community and makes tourism more memorable.

Studies in Rostov, Russia, show that hands-on farming experiences can make villages more attractive to tourists (Kalinina et al., 2024). Meanwhile in Kazakhstan, the "One Village, One Product" program was successful in promoting local products and creating jobs (Sarina et al., 2024).

Agrotourism also supports environmental conservation. In Karpaty, an integrated approach between agriculture and conservation helps maintain the ecosystem (Hazuda et al., 2023). But to be successful, promotion and management must be managed well. In Hungary, digital promotions and improvements in service quality have been shown to increase visits (Szabó et al., 2020).

#### **c. Agrotourism Packages to Attract Tourists**

Tour packages can be an effective way to attract tourists to Sembalun. For example, the "Farmer for a Day" package allows tourists to pick fruit or grow their own vegetables. However, information about packages like this is still minimal. Research in Lampung shows the importance of cooperation between the government, tourism actors and communities to market agrotourism (Roslina et al., 2022). Research in Kulon Progo confirms that easy access to information and direct experience have a big influence on tourist satisfaction (Fatmawati et al., 2023). A study in Semarang found that tourism package innovation and digital promotion were the keys to successful agrotourism (Kinasih et al., 2020). In Malaysia, one of the biggest obstacles is a lack of information. Therefore, digital technology such as online ordering and promotions via social media are very important (Utama, 2023).

### **Collaboration and Empowerment of Village Communities**

#### **a. Empowering Local MSMEs Through Agrotourism**

Agrotourism in Sembalun is not only a tourist spot, but also a great opportunity for MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) to develop. Local products such as honey, Sembalun specialty coffee and traditional food can be promoted and sold to tourists. This helps increase people's income and strengthen local identity (Sarina et al., 2024). However, many MSMEs still do not fully understand the concept of agrotourism. They also often have difficulty getting business capital. Village governments have started to address this with training and counseling, but challenges

such as infrastructure and marketing strategies are still large (Pantiyasa et al., 2021). Studies in Kazakhstan show that the “One Village – One Product” program can help improve the quality and competitiveness of local products. This model emphasizes the importance of marketing and financing support so that MSMEs can develop (Sarina et al., 2024). Apart from training and access to capital, synergy or cooperation between MSME players, the community and the government is very important. If all parties work together, agrotourism can be an effective space for MSMEs to grow and support the local economy in a sustainable manner (Hrymak et al., 2019).

#### **b. The Role of Local Communities in Promotion of Sembalun Agrotourism**

Local communities, especially young people and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), have an important role in promoting agrotourism. They actively market Sembalun through social media such as Instagram and TikTok. This helps attract the attention of tourists, especially the younger generation (Sekar et al., 2023; Sulmiah et al., 2024). Apart from digital promotions, the community is also directly involved in providing tourism experiences, such as serving as guides, welcoming guests, and holding agricultural festivals. The village government supports this by providing training and mentoring so that people are more confident and skilled (Salam et al., 2023). Local products made by MSMEs are also promoted. Sembalun's typical food, which was introduced via social media, is now becoming increasingly well known to tourists. Research in Vietnam shows that agrotourism managed with communities can increase residents' income and attract more tourists (Lan & Hanh, 2020).

#### **Promotion of Agrotourism in the Digital Era**

##### **a. Digital Marketing Strategy in Agrotourism Development in Sembalun**

Digital marketing is very important to introduce Sembalun agrotourism to more people. Currently, the community and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) are actively using Instagram, Facebook and TikTok to share natural beauty, educational tourism activities and local products. However, there are still many people who are not yet familiar with digital technology. The village's official website is not yet widely known by tourists. This is a challenge in promotion.

Research in Banyuwangi shows that digital marketing training can improve farmers' ability to sell their products online. As a result, more than 85% of coffee farmers succeeded in opening a digital shop after training (Dedi & Harlina, 2022). This shows that proper mentoring really helps. Another study in Lampung suggested that promotion be carried out collaboratively, involving the government, community and private sector. Authentic tourism experiences and collaboration with influencers or tourism agents can also expand the reach of promotions (Roslina et al., 2022). In order for promotion to be more effective, village websites need to be optimized with SEO, collaboration with travel bloggers, and paid advertising. According to Roslina et al. (2021), community-based promotions are able to build trust and reach more tourists.

##### **b. The Role of Social Media in Agrotourism Development in Sembalun**

Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok are very helpful in promoting Sembalun agrotourism. Many tourists know about Sembalun from content shared on social media. Research shows that promotions via social media can increase the number of visitors and people's income. For example, in Bangun Harja village, Kalimantan, this strategy has proven successful (Lestariningsih et al., 2024). However, the main challenge is that there are still many MSMEs and village residents who do not understand how to use social media for promotion. They still rely on promotion from the government or word of mouth.

Research in Yogyakarta shows that training in creating social media content can improve people's digital skills and strengthen tourism promotion (Wahyuni et al., 2022). Social media has great potential for agrotourism promotion, but it requires training, active community involvement, and a more planned promotional strategy so that the benefits are felt more widely.

#### **Optimal Strategy for Developing Agrotourism in Sembalun**

##### **a. Identify the Potential and Uniqueness of Agrotourism in Sembalun**

-Exploring the Variety of Agrotourism in Sembalun

Sembalun has a lot of agrotourism potential because the nature is beautiful, the agricultural products are diverse, and the people are actively involved. Activities such as picking strawberries, planting garlic and vegetable gardening are unique attractions. Tourists not only see, but also take part in the farming process. This provides a tourist experience that is both fun and educational. Research in Bantaeng shows that government support is important in providing facilities and promotion for agrotourism (Sulmiah et al., 2024). In Sembalun, the village government is also working with residents so that agricultural potential can be developed into a tourist attraction.

The success of agrotourism also depends on community involvement. Studies in Thailand state that community-based tourism management can strengthen residents' ability to market their villages (Srithong et al., 2019). However, digital promotion in Sembalun still needs to be improved because not all residents are used to using technology. Agrotourism must also be protected so as not to damage the environment and local culture. Studies in Vietnam warn that without

good management, agrotourism can cause damage to nature and turn culture into just a spectacle (Lan & Hanh, 2020). To optimize agrotourism potential, Sembalun needs to increase training for residents, wider digital promotions, and increase the variety of tourism products. With support from all parties, this village can become an example of tourism that combines economy, culture and the environment in a balanced way (Sekar et al., 2023).

#### **b. Understanding the Cultural Values and Uniqueness of Sembalun Agrotourism**

Agrotourism in Sembalun is not only about natural beauty, but also a way to get to know the culture of the people. Agriculture is part of people's daily lives, and the tradition of farming has been passed down for a long time. Tourists can learn directly from farmers about how to plant, harvest and process agricultural products. Research in Greece shows that agrotourism helps maintain farming traditions while increasing residents' income (Karagianni et al., 2019). In Sembalun, mutual cooperation in water management and traditional farming methods are a unique attraction.

Studies in Nigeria also state that agrotourism can strengthen relations between tourists and local residents (Olagunju, 2024). Apart from that, local culinary delights from agricultural products, such as coffee, garlic and organic vegetables, are also an interesting experience for tourists. Research in India says culinary tourism can increase value local product economy and strengthen the attractiveness of destinations (Sinha & Ali, 2024). However, culture-based agrotourism also has risks. If it is too commercialized, cultural meaning can be lost. Studies from India and Europe warn that traditions can lose value if they are only used as a spectacle (Sekar et al., 2023). Sembalun has cultural strength that can be an agrotourism attraction. However, it is important to maintain the meaning of tradition and actively involve the community so that tourism develops in a correct and sustainable way.

#### **Agrotourism Innovation and Development**

##### **a. Agrotourism Innovation and Creation in Sembalun**

Innovation is the key in developing Sembalun agrotourism to make it more attractive and sustainable. Various efforts have been made, such as creating educational tour packages, using social media for promotion, and starting to implement environmentally friendly agriculture. These steps not only increase the number of tourist visits, but also strengthen the community's economy and protect the surrounding nature. Research shows that innovative agrotourism can help reduce unemployment and prevent the migration of rural residents to cities (Olagunju, 2024). In Sembalun, the community has been trained in digital marketing and tourism services, so they are better prepared to compete in the tourism sector. From an environmental perspective, organic farming is starting to be implemented to maintain ecosystem balance. Research in Indonesia also states that sustainable agrotourism must pay attention to natural resource management (Sriyadi & Yekti, 2021). Apart from that, limited information about agrotourism destinations is still an obstacle. Studies in Malaysia suggest using digital applications such as Google Maps to reach more tourists (Man & Aspany, 2020). With the support of technology and collaboration from all parties—community, government and private sector—Sembalun agrotourism can continue to develop into a leading tourist destination that remains environmentally friendly and brings welfare to its residents.

##### **b. Maintaining Authenticity and Quality of Agrotourism in Sembalun**

In order for Sembalun agrotourism to remain attractive and sustainable, it is important to maintain cultural authenticity and service quality. The community continues to maintain traditional farming methods and participates in tourism service training (hospitality), so that tourists can experience a unique and warm experience. Research in Waturaka states that community-based management is able to maintain cultural and ecological values, although from an economic perspective it still needs to be strengthened (Saji et al., 2024). In Sembalun, training continues to be carried out so that the community is better prepared to welcome tourists and provide quality services. Implementing organic farming is also an important part so that tourism does not damage nature. Studies in Yogyakarta encourage a local wisdom-based approach to preserving the environment and culture (Sriyadi & Yekti, 2021). Meanwhile, from a service perspective, skills training for residents has been proven to increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Sekar et al., 2023). The long-term success of Sembalun agrotourism requires the cooperation of all parties. Studies from North Tapanuli show that infrastructure development, citizen involvement, and strengthening local products are very influential in creating successful agrotourism (Riady et al., 2024). Apart from that, authentic value-based tourism has been proven to make tourists more satisfied and want to visit again. Research also suggests that halal and ecotourism principles be applied as service standards (Athar, 2023).

#### **Empowering Local Communities to Support Agrotourism Development in Sembalun**

Training and education are important elements in improving the quality of agrotourism in Sembalun. The village government together with related institutions have provided training on agricultural processes, from seeding to marketing. However, challenges still exist regarding sustainability and inconsistent training frequency. Research states that lack of training is the main obstacle in the development of sustainable agrotourism (Hrymak et al., 2019). Therefore, people need to receive regular training to be able to manage tourism professionally. The training program in Sembalun has also involved parties such as Poltekpar, which provides training on processing strawberries such as





ice cream so that local products have added value and are more attractive to tourists. This is in accordance with the findings of Sekar et al. (2023) that community-based training can accelerate the development of market-oriented agrotourism.

However, it is not enough for training to just focus on farming techniques. A study by Utama (2023) suggests that education should also include financial management, digital marketing and product innovation, so that people can compete in the tourism industry. Digital marketing training, especially for MSMEs, is really needed in Sembalun to reach a wider market. For maximum impact, training must be carried out continuously and comprehensively. Saji et al. (2024) emphasized that the success of community-based agrotourism is very dependent on active community participation and support from the government and academics

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Agrotourism in Sembalun has great potential to develop into a sustainable agriculture-based tourism destination, driven by natural beauty, diversity of agricultural products, and active involvement of local communities. The participation of the Sembalun community is very important in developing agrotourism, both in providing tourism services, such as tour guides, homestays and educational gardens, as well as in providing agricultural products for the culinary and souvenir industry. Farmers are also involved in agritourism decision making and planning, which strengthens the sustainability and success of the program.

The main supporting factors in developing agrotourism in Sembalun are natural and cultural riches, public awareness of the potential of agrotourism, as well as support from the government and the private sector. Collaboration between government, society and the private sector has proven important in strengthening the agrotourism ecosystem. However, some of the challenges faced include a lack of understanding of professional agrotourism management, minimal promotion of products other than strawberries, and limited capital and technology. The potential for agrotourism in Sembalun can be optimized by developing tourism products such as strawberry picking, garlic educational tourism, coffee tourism, organic vegetable plantations, and preserving traditional farming methods. Agricultural festivals and cultural attractions can also increase tourist attraction and introduce local products. Strategies to optimize this potential include product diversification, improving service quality, digital marketing, empowering MSMEs, and environmental and cultural sustainability. With multi-party collaboration and professional management, Sembalun agrotourism can develop into a profitable tourism model for local communities, while maintaining ecological sustainability and cultural preservation.

## **6. RECOMENDATION**

Based on the conclusions outlined, there are several suggestions that can be given to support the development of agrotourism in Sembalun. The government is expected to encourage innovation in diversifying agricultural-based tourism products, such as processing harvests into value-added products. The government also needs to develop more attractive educational tourism packages and increase the development of infrastructure and supporting facilities that will increase tourist comfort. Training for farmers and MSMEs in managing agrotourism, hospitality and digital marketing is also very necessary. Apart from that, collaboration with academics and the private sector in strengthening human resource capacity and increasing the branding of Sembalun as a sustainable agrotourism destination must be improved. The government needs to facilitate synergy between local communities, academics and business actors in managing agrotourism and encourage data-based research and innovation.

MSMEs and farmers in Sembalun also have a crucial role in developing sustainable agrotourism. They need to continue to improve their skills and innovation in processing and marketing agricultural-based products. MSMEs are expected to be able to develop processed products from local agricultural products with attractive packaging and strong branding. Apart from that, the use of social media and digital platforms to expand market reach needs to be maximized. MSME players must also ensure product quality through the necessary standardization and certification and reduce the use of plastic for environmentally friendly packaging.

It is hoped that the Sembalun community can play a more active role in supporting and developing agrotourism, such as becoming tour guides or local agriculture-based culinary entrepreneurs. Developing community-based tourism will ensure that economic benefits can be felt equally by local residents. Communities also need to maintain traditional agricultural methods that are environmentally friendly and keep tourist areas clean by reducing plastic waste and implementing good waste management.

Lastly, academics have an important role in providing support through research and innovation. Research related to sustainable agriculture, digital marketing, and community-based tourism destination management strategies need to be carried out to increase the competitiveness of agrotourism in Sembalun. Apart from that, academics can carry out training for farmers and MSMEs regarding product innovation and the use of technology in

marketing. Collaboration between academics, students and industry also needs to be encouraged in creating innovative and competitive agritourism business models.

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