

Women's Voices on the Transformation of Kandri–Semarang from an Ordinary Village into a Tourism Village

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Abstract

This study explores local women's voices on the transformation of Kandri Village, Semarang, Central Java, from an ordinary settlement into a tourism village, a process critical for fostering inclusive and community-centered development. The transformation of Kandri has been driven through collaborative initiatives involving village leadership, government agencies, and academic institutions. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative inquiry with field observation, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with ten local women from diverse professional backgrounds. Each interview was guided by the central question: "Could you share your opinion regarding the transformation of Kandri from an ordinary village into a tourism village?" The findings identify three distinct groups of women based on their perspectives toward the village's tourism transformation: those who are enthusiastic and supportive of the change, those who remain neutral, and those who express disappointment due to their limited involvement in the process. While Kandri's development as a tourism village has gained notable attention in academic and policy discussions, public awareness among Semarang residents remains limited despite the village's proximity to the city. These insights highlight a disconnect between institutional narratives and community-level recognition, emphasizing the importance of enhancing communication, participation, and inclusiveness in tourism-driven rural development.

Keywords: *Women Study; Inclusive; Tourism Village; Mixed Method; Kandri.*

Introduction

The village leader envisioned transforming Kandri Village from an ordinary settlement into a tourism village, and this initiative has received full support from the government. Over the past few years, the village has shown significant improvement through the homestay program, which is fully funded by the government to upgrade local homes with proper guest bedrooms. The aim is to provide sufficient accommodation for foreign visitors participating in cultural festivals, thereby boosting local income. This research examines local women's voices regarding the program to ensure inclusiveness and to assess whether the initiative has effectively increased household income as intended.

Literature Study

Key Criteria in the Transition from Ordinary Village to Tourism Village

1. *Clear vision and leadership (Gao & Wu, 2017).*

A coherent vision, championed by credible local leadership, aligns stakeholders and mobilizes resources. Operational indicators: documented tourism strategy/development plan; visible champions (village head, community group); formal agreements with government/partners.

2. *Institutional support and governance (Qian et al., 2016).*
Sustainable transformation requires multi-level governance (local, municipal, regional) and formal institutional arrangements. Operational indicators: official designation (e.g., “tourism village” decree), interagency coordination mechanisms, existence of a community tourism body (Pokdarwis or equivalent), MOUs with universities/private sector.
 3. *Community participation and inclusiveness (Yanan et al., 2024).*
Community ownership reduces leakage, increases equity, and sustains cultural authenticity. Operational indicators: participatory planning meetings, representation of women/elders/youth in decision-making, equitable benefit-sharing rules, training programs targeted at vulnerable groups.
 4. *Cultural and natural asset readiness (Ma et al., 2018).*
Authentic attractions both tangible and intangible are the foundation of rural tourism. Operational indicators: inventory of heritage sites, festivals, craft skills, natural landscapes; conservation plans; quality standards for cultural interpretation.
 5. *Human capacity and entrepreneurship (Utami et al., 2023).*
Local skills in hospitality, guiding, small enterprise management, and language are required to convert assets into experiences. Operational indicators: number of trained hosts/guides; homestay quality standards; entrepreneurship incubation; vocational partnerships with TEFs (Transnational Education Facilities).
 6. *Infrastructure and basic services (Gao & Wu, 2017).*
Adequate transport, sanitation, water, waste management, and accommodation are minimum conditions for visitor satisfaction and sustainability. Operational indicators: road accessibility, signage, reliable utilities, certified homestays, waste recycling programs, public amenities.
 7. *Market access and destination management (Royo-Vela, 2009).*
Product development must link to demand through branding, promotion, and distribution channels. Operational indicators: tourism branding/website, participation in regional itineraries, collaboration with tour operators, digital presence, multilingual materials.
 8. *Economic viability and benefit distribution (Fafurida et al., 2023).*
Tourism should create sustainable livelihoods without overdependence or economic displacement. Operational indicators: local share of tourism revenue, number of tourism-related jobs, microenterprise creation, mechanisms to prevent land/price speculation.
 9. *Safety, legal compliance, and quality assurance (Yanan et al., 2024).*
Risk management (health, safety, legal) and consistent service quality sustain reputation and trust. Operational indicators: emergency plans, insurance policies, compliance with local regulations, certification schemes for homestays and guides.
 10. *Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive governance (Qian et al., 2016).*
Continuous evaluation allows learning, course correction, and evidence-based policymaking. Operational indicators: KPI dashboards (economic, social, environmental), periodic community satisfaction surveys, grievance mechanisms, participatory M&E.
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11. Financial mechanisms and access to funding (Yan & Chen, 2018).

Initial and ongoing financing (public grants, micro-credit, private investment) is essential for infrastructure, training, and marketing. Operational indicators: documented funding sources, community savings groups, pilot funding for homestays, transparent financial management.

This study investigates the transformation of Kandri from an ordinary village into a tourism village, assessing the extent to which the development process aligns with established tourism-village criteria. Furthermore, the research aims to enhance inclusiveness by foregrounding the voices of local women, documenting their perspectives on the village's transition toward tourism-based development.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate local women's perspectives on the transformation of Kandri–Semarang from an ordinary village into a tourism village. The methodological design combined qualitative inquiry with field observation to capture both experiential narratives and contextual conditions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten local women representing diverse professions, guided by the initial question: “*Could you share your opinion about the transformation of Kandri from an ordinary village into a tourism village?*”

Research Design

The research process was implemented in three sequential stages.

Step 1:

The research team conducted fieldwork in Kandri Tourism Village during a mixed-marriage celebration, undertaking semi-structured interviews with ten local women representing diverse occupational backgrounds. Simultaneously, field observations were performed to document village activities, tourism facilities, and community engagement. Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the village leader, who also facilitated access to the participants.

Step 2:

All interview recordings were compiled and transcribed verbatim to maintain the accuracy, completeness, and credibility of the qualitative dataset.

Step 3:

The research team collaboratively analysed the data through an iterative coding process followed by a thematic review. The emergent insights were jointly refined, synthesised, and prepared for dissemination in the final manuscript.

Informants' Profiles

This study engaged ten local women with various professions as key informants, selected based on the following criteria: female, aged 21 years and above, and having resided in Kandri Tourism Village for a minimum of twelve months. Their demographic and background information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Informants' Profile

Code	Age Range	Length of Residence at Kandri Tourism Village (year)	Occupation
W1	40-45	>30	Housewife
W2	40-45	>30	Housewife
W3	70-75	20-30	Housewife
W4	25-30	20-30	Housewife
W5	30-35	>30	Small Store
W6	30-35	>30	Home Industry
W7	20-25	1-10	Flower for Wedding
W8	45-50	20-30	Housewife
W9	45-50	10-20	Public Officer
W10	20-25	1-10	University Student

As shown in Table 1, the majority of local women in Kandri Tourism Village are primarily engaged as housewives. However, during cultural events, namely the mixed-culture wedding observed in this study, they actively participate in communal kitchen activities to prepare traditional dishes funded by the families of the bride and groom. These occasions provide them with opportunities to earn additional income.

Research Findings and Discussions

Clear Vision and Leadership

The findings show that the village leader possesses a clear, strategic, and future-oriented vision to transform Kandri from an ordinary residential area into a tourism village, thereby aligning with the “clear vision and leadership” criterion outlined by Gao and Wu (2017). All informants confirmed that he has played a pivotal role in steering this transformation by actively securing support from government agencies and academic institutions. His success in obtaining government funding has been essential in translating his developmental plans into concrete outcomes. This demonstrates not only effective leadership but also meets the second criterion for tourism village development - *institutional support and governance* - as proposed by Qian et al. (2016).



Figure 1.
Interview with the Village Leader

Beyond policy direction, the village leader also demonstrates strong social and cultural leadership. He mobilises the younger generation to learn and preserve local cultural traditions, including traditional arts, dance, and music, with practice sessions held regularly in the evenings several times a week. In addition, he provides continuous support for religious activities across different community groups, including elderly residents, women, and youth. His personal premises featuring both spacious indoor and outdoor areas are frequently used as communal spaces for these cultural and religious activities, particularly during evening gatherings. These efforts reflect a high level of community engagement and inclusiveness, thereby fulfilling *the community participation and inclusiveness* criterion for tourism village development as outlined by Yanan et al. (2024).

Economically, the village leader aims to enhance household income by positioning Kandri as a culturally rich tourism destination. To attract international visitors, he leverages the village's strong cultural identity and benefits from access to foreign networks through his son-in-law, who is a foreign national. These efforts demonstrate that Kandri meets *the market access and destination management* criterion for tourism village development, as outlined by Royo-Vela (2009). Recognising the limited availability of suitable accommodation, the leader successfully secured government funding to develop homestays that meet international standards. The funding was distributed across selected households to construct proper guest rooms, including the installation of air-conditioning units to accommodate the village's warm climate. As a result, approximately 20 guest rooms were developed across 20 homes in Kandri Tourism Village. This initiative further satisfies two key criteria for tourism village development: *financial mechanisms and access to funding* (Yan & Chen, 2018) and *infrastructure and basic services* (Gao & Wu, 2017).



Figure 2.
Interview with Informants

However, field observations revealed that Kandri Tourism Village still lacks adequate medical facilities, with the nearest clinic located approximately 2 km outside the village. This study therefore highlights the urgent need to establish proper medical services within the village—not only to ensure the safety and comfort of both international and domestic visitors, but also to meet the essential health needs of local residents.

Interviews with W1, W2, W3, W4, and W8 reveal strong support for the leader’s vision. All four informants expressed satisfaction with the transformation of Kandri into a tourism village and reported that this initiative has enabled them to generate additional income. Their enthusiasm is further reinforced by the selection of their homes for inclusion in the homestay programme, which has allowed them to directly experience the economic benefits of the village’s tourism development. These women therefore represent a group of local residents who actively support and benefit from Kandri’s transition into a tourism village.

Cultural and Natural Asset Readiness

Kandri demonstrates strong potential as a tourism village not only because of its rich cultural heritage but also due to the community’s active efforts to present these traditions as tourism attractions. For instance, the mixed-culture wedding ceremony and celebration observed during fieldwork attracted approximately one thousand guests, showcasing both cultural vibrancy and organisational capacity. Inclusiveness was also evident throughout the event: women aged 30 years (W1, W2, W3, W4) and above worked collectively in the communal kitchen to prepare large quantities of traditional food; younger women (W8) managed food and beverage stalls at the wedding venue; elderly women guided the ceremonial rituals; and young female participants served as bridesmaids and performed the opening traditional dance. These observations indicate that Kandri successfully meets the cultural and natural asset readiness criterion for tourism village development as outlined by Ma et al. (2018).



Figure 3.
Field Observation

Human Capacity and Entrepreneurship

Another key criterion for tourism village development is human capacity and entrepreneurship (Utami et al., 2023). Semi-structured interviews with W5, W6, and W7 reveal that these local micro-entrepreneurs have not yet experienced significant financial benefits from Kandri's transformation into a tourism village, whether in the form of government funding or increased sales. W5 operates a small food and beverage kiosk, W6 manages a family-run cassava cracker home industry, and W7 runs a small business supplying flowers for wedding ceremonies. Although all three women agreed that the vision to transform Kandri into a tourism village is commendable, they acknowledged that they have not personally benefited from this transition. Each informant expressed her perspective differently. W5 felt unbothered that her home was not selected to receive government funding for homestay development, as she remains financially stable due to her husband's external employment. W6 reported satisfaction with her current income from cassava products, which are officially recognised as Kandri's local specialty; visitors are routinely guided to her shop to purchase snacks as souvenirs. In contrast, W7 expressed greater disappointment about not being selected for the homestay funding programme. Nevertheless, she remains highly supportive of the tourism village initiative and stated her willingness to contribute through digital marketing efforts, although she has not yet been given the opportunity to participate.

These findings indicate that, despite having existing local products and individuals with entrepreneurial motivation, Kandri still requires further capacity building to fully meet the human capacity and entrepreneurship criterion. In particular, the village leader could collaborate with W7 to develop a digital marketing strategy that enhances product visibility and strengthens community-based entrepreneurship, thereby advancing Kandri's readiness as a tourism village in line with Utami et al. (2023).

Economic Viability and Benefit Distribution

Fafurida et al. (2023) highlight economic viability and benefit distribution as key criteria for tourism village development. Findings from interviews and field observations indicate that Kandri is beginning to experience modest economic activity generated through cultural events, alongside partial benefit distribution from the government-funded homestay programme, which currently supports 20 households. Given that Kandri Tourism Village has nearly 2,000 residents, these early outcomes are understandable, as the transformation process is still in its initial stages. The evidence suggests that the village is progressing toward economic inclusivity, although further expansion of benefits will likely be necessary as development continues.

Because the primary investment originates from government funding, robust auditing and oversight mechanisms are essential. According to the village leader, government officers regularly conduct evaluations and on-site inspections to ensure proper implementation. Based on this information, the study infers that Kandri meets the criteria of safety, legal compliance, and quality assurance (Yanan et al., 2024), as well as monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive governance (Qian et al., 2016).

Women's Voices

This study identifies three distinct responses among the ten informants regarding Kandri's transformation from an ordinary village into a tourism village:

- Delighted (W1, W2, W3, W4, W8)
 - Disappointed (W5, W6, W7)
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- Neutral (W9, W10)

The delighted group expressed enthusiasm because they benefited financially; their homes were selected to construct additional guest rooms, enabling them to start homestay businesses fully funded by the government. The disappointed group, in contrast, indicated a willingness to contribute more to the transformation process but reported having had no opportunity to participate. The neutral group, although residing in Kandri, have occupations outside the village and therefore remain less engaged with the tourism initiatives.

This variation in responses presents a challenge for village leadership: ensuring that the vision to transform Kandri into a tourism village becomes truly inclusive, empowering all local women to participate actively and equitably in the economic and social benefits generated by tourism development.

Conclusions

Based on interviews with ten informants and field observation, this study synthesises local women's voices on the transformation of Kandri, Semarang, from an ordinary village into a tourism village. All informants acknowledged and affirmed that the village leader demonstrates clear vision and leadership, which requires holistic support from government agencies, academic institutions, residents, and the tourism market.

The women also recognised that Kandri possesses strong cultural and natural asset readiness, which can be further refined to serve as attractive tourism offerings capable of drawing both domestic and international visitors. However, they emphasised that human capacity and entrepreneurship skills need to be strengthened to maximise income generation from the village's tourism transformation.

Regarding economic viability and benefit distribution, the informants noted that current outcomes remain limited and require improvement over time. Encouragingly, some women expressed a willingness to contribute their skills to support the success of Kandri's transformation.

These insights highlight the critical importance of inclusiveness throughout the transformation process. Ensuring broad participation enables all residents to develop a strong sense of ownership and belonging, ultimately fostering collective efforts to realise the village leader's vision of establishing Kandri as a sustainable and prosperous tourism village.

Recommendation

For future research, it would be valuable to continue examining the transformation of Kandri from an ordinary village into a tourism village, with a particular focus on ensuring that women's voices are heard and integrated throughout the process. This study is limited by its focus on the early stages of the village's transformation, and longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into the evolving roles, experiences, and contributions of local women as the tourism initiatives develop over time.

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