

A Quantitative SWOT Analysis of Rural Tourism Villages in West Java: Enhancing Community Empowerment Through Sustainable Tourism Development

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Abstract

Rural tourism has been increasingly recognised as a strategic instrument for inclusive and sustainable development, particularly in regions with rich cultural and ecological assets. This study examines the strategic readiness of rural tourism development in West Java, Indonesia, through a quantitative SWOT analysis conducted using a desk study approach. Drawing upon 45 credible secondary sources—including government reports, academic literature, and development policy documents—20 key internal and external factors were identified, categorized, and evaluated using a structured weighting and rating process. Internal factors comprised strengths such as cultural richness, community participation, and institutional support, alongside weaknesses including poor infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, and weak digital marketing. External factors encompassed opportunities, such as the post-pandemic preference for nature-based tourism and increasing policy alignment, as well as threats, including environmental degradation and fragmented governance. The Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE) matrices yielded total scores of 2.85 and 3.10, respectively, positioning West Java's rural tourism within the aggressive strategy quadrant. This suggests that existing internal capacities can be leveraged to capitalise on favourable external conditions. Strategic implications include the need to develop localised, digitally integrated tourism products, foster public-private partnerships for infrastructure enhancement, and promote participatory governance frameworks. The study contributes to theoretical discourse by demonstrating the applicability of quantitative SWOT analysis using secondary data and offers practical insights for sustainable tourism planning in rural contexts. It concludes that with strategic alignment, rural tourism in West Java can serve as a model for culturally grounded, environmentally responsible, and community-driven development.

Keywords: Rural Tourism; Strategic Planning; Quantitative SWOT Analysis; Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has gained growing recognition as a transformative strategy for revitalising rural economies and promoting inclusive development, particularly in emerging economies where socio-economic disparities remain pronounced. By emphasising community participation and the valorisation of cultural and natural assets, rural tourism serves as a platform for both economic empowerment and heritage preservation (Zečević et al., 2024; Kovšun et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the concept of *desa wisata* has evolved into a central pillar of national tourism policy, with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy spearheading initiatives to integrate rural areas into broader sustainable development agendas. Cross-national studies from China, Kenya, and Tanzania have consistently affirmed that rural tourism can significantly enhance employment, reduce poverty, and diversify livelihoods in peripheral regions, while simultaneously reinforcing social capital and place identity (Nzomo & Muriuki, 2022; Xia, 2022; Xiaodan, 2024).

Situated at the intersection of cultural richness and ecological diversity, West Java offers a compelling case for examining rural tourism dynamics in practice. The

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province's geographic proximity to Jakarta and Bandung, combined with its vibrant Sundanese heritage and diverse landscapes, has catalysed the emergence of numerous tourism villages offering agro-based, cultural, and eco-tourism experiences. However, despite these endowments, many destinations struggle with structural limitations—such as underdeveloped infrastructure, weak institutional coordination, and minimal digital outreach—which inhibit their growth and resilience (Juhriah & Rahmah, 2023). Scholars have underscored the critical role of inclusive stakeholder engagement in strengthening governance frameworks and enhancing the effectiveness of rural tourism initiatives (Rachmiate et al., 2023). Furthermore, the rapid digitalization of the tourism sector, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, requires that rural destinations adapt to changing visitor behaviors through enhanced technological integration and online visibility (Utarsih et al., 2023).

In rural West Java, tourism is increasingly viewed not only as a source of supplementary income but also as a strategic vehicle for regional diversification beyond agriculture. The economic role of tourism is particularly significant in villages where traditional subsistence practices offer limited opportunities for upward mobility. In such contexts, sustainable tourism development must be closely aligned with the protection of local ecosystems and the safeguarding of cultural traditions, in line with both global tourism trends and domestic policy objectives (Ismail et al., 2023). Central to this endeavour is the development of place-based strategies that consider local aspirations, ecological thresholds, and market realities.

Despite the clear potential, the effective implementation of rural tourism in West Java hinges on navigating complex socio-political, environmental, and economic challenges. From limited access to capital and human resources to market competition from urban destinations, rural tourism actors face a constellation of pressures that can undermine long-term viability. Marketing strategies remain underutilised, often failing to fully communicate the distinctiveness of local tourism offerings or engage prospective visitors in meaningful ways (Anggraeni et al., 2024). Moreover, uncoordinated development risks commodifying cultural practices and degrading natural landscapes, especially in the absence of robust governance and monitoring mechanisms.

This study aims to address these critical issues by examining the conditions that underpin the success and limitations of rural tourism villages in West Java. Through a detailed empirical investigation involving diverse stakeholders—ranging from community leaders and tourism managers to visiting tourists—it aims to identify the core drivers of community empowerment and sustainability in rural tourism contexts. In doing so, the research contributes to global discussions on rural transformation and offers actionable insights for enhancing tourism-led development models that are both inclusive and ecologically responsible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural Tourism and Regional Development

Rural tourism has emerged as a strategic intervention for revitalising economically marginalised regions, providing alternative income streams, stimulating entrepreneurship, and preserving local cultural and environmental assets. By leveraging place-based resources, rural tourism not only diversifies rural economies but also enhances household resilience and mitigates youth out-migration through tourism-led regeneration (Ai, 2024; Saputro et al., 2023). Empirical evidence highlights its capacity to contribute to regional development by promoting cultural authenticity, enhancing environmental awareness, and meeting the growing demand for immersive tourism experiences. However, the success of such initiatives remains uneven, often constrained by infrastructure deficits, inadequate marketing capabilities, and fragile institutional ecosystems that limit scalability and governance efficiency (Wang, 2023; Wu, 2023). Integrated tourism planning, as evidenced by studies in Kenya, has been shown to significantly improve employment generation and reinforce the sustainability of local tourism economies (Nzomo & Muriuki, 2022).

In addition to its economic functions, rural tourism also reinforces community identity and social cohesion by embedding local culture into the tourism value chain. This alignment between tourism and community values fosters a sense of ownership and encourages long-term local investment (Liu et al., 2023; Yu-kai, 2024). As rural communities engage more actively in tourism planning and operation, the socio-cultural fabric of the region is strengthened, supporting both economic empowerment and social capital. Furthermore, rural tourism facilitates spatial integration between urban and rural economies by improving accessibility and creating new market linkages (Sili et al., 2022). This urban-rural synergy enables more cohesive regional development strategies, advancing mutual benefits across sectors and territories. Thus, rural tourism serves not only as an economic catalyst but also as a vehicle for inclusive, place-sensitive, and culturally grounded development.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Local Empowerment

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a transformative model for rural tourism development, foregrounding the role of local communities as both beneficiaries and active agents in shaping tourism trajectories. Rather than viewing tourism as an externally imposed activity, CBT reframes development as a bottom-up, participatory process that enhances cultural authenticity, fosters equitable distribution of benefits, and strengthens social cohesion. Local involvement in planning, governance, and service delivery cultivates a sense of ownership and agency, enabling communities to safeguard their cultural and environmental heritage while building resilience to economic fluctuations. Studies have affirmed that CBT empowers marginalised populations by granting them greater control over economic and cultural outcomes, thereby reinforcing their collective identity and pride (Mestanza-Ramón & Jiménez-Caballero, 2024). Moreover, by promoting horizontal relationships and trust among community members, CBT nurtures vital forms of social capital necessary for long-term sustainability (Bassols & Bonilla, 2022).

However, the successful implementation of CBT is contingent upon deliberate investments in capacity-building, institutional support, and infrastructure. Communities must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to manage tourism professionally, encompassing a range of skills, from hospitality and marketing to environmental conservation and business negotiation. Without access to training and resource networks, local actors may remain vulnerable to external pressures or fail to meet tourism demands (Vélez et al., 2023). Collaborative governance frameworks are fundamental in aligning the interests of communities with those of external stakeholders, including government agencies and private enterprises (Bassols & Bonilla, 2022). Real-world examples, such as community-based tourism in Ecuador, illustrate how structured participation in tourism management can improve local economic outcomes and increase the value of cultural and natural assets (Vélez et al., 2023). Nonetheless, persistent barriers—such as limited financial capital, uneven access to information, and internal power dynamics—necessitate sustained facilitation by public institutions and NGOs to ensure inclusive and accountable CBT governance.

Governance and Institutional Challenges in Rural Tourism

Institutional quality is widely recognised as a cornerstone of successful rural tourism development, particularly in contexts where administrative systems directly mediate the distribution of resources, stakeholder engagement, and the enforcement of sustainability principles. Effective governance frameworks must promote participatory decision-making, ensure transparent resource allocation, and facilitate coordination across sectors. However, many rural regions remain burdened by bureaucratic fragmentation and unclear regulatory environments, which often result in duplicated efforts, inefficiencies, and implementation delays (Dang et al., 2022; Pantović et al., 2023). These systemic deficiencies not only undermine tourism's developmental potential but also erode stakeholder trust and disrupt long-term planning.

One of the central governance challenges is the fragmentation of authority across multiple agencies, resulting in contradictory regulations and administrative bottlenecks. Entrepreneurs and local tourism actors often face challenges in navigating conflicting policies or obtaining operational permits, which hinders innovation and investment (Li et al., 2022). In addition, the limited administrative capacity of local governments—manifested in both human resources and technical expertise—restricts their ability to design, implement, and monitor effective tourism strategies (Jia et al., 2022). Without the institutional competencies to support inclusive tourism management, efforts to mobilise community participation and improve resident well-being are likely to fall short (Göde et al., 2023).

To address these obstacles, scholars emphasise the need for collaborative governance mechanisms that integrate diverse stakeholders—ranging from residents and NGOs to public officials and private investors—into a shared decision-making process. Such mechanisms enhance transparency, build mutual trust, and align development priorities across scales (Yu et al., 2023). Strategic interventions should focus on strengthening institutional frameworks through regulatory clarity, cross-sectoral cooperation, and targeted capacity-building efforts tailored to local needs (Xiao et al., 2022; You, 2022). Ultimately, improving governance in rural tourism not only ensures more effective and equitable outcomes but also lays the foundation for long-term sustainability and socio-economic inclusiveness.

Digitalisation and Tourism Visibility

The digital transformation of the tourism sector has redefined how destinations are promoted, consumed, and governed, offering unprecedented opportunities for visibility and market access, particularly in rural settings. Digital platforms enable remote communities to engage broader audiences, streamline service delivery, and communicate in real time with tourists and stakeholders. In rural tourism, where geographic

isolation often limits access to conventional marketing channels, digital tools provide an essential bridge to the global tourism economy. Empirical studies suggest that digitalisation enhances economic productivity, reduces service costs, and generates employment opportunities through new tourism-related digital services (Hamdamov, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of online booking systems, virtual tours, and collaborative content marketing can significantly enhance the competitiveness and appeal of rural destinations (Cheng et al., 2023; Han et al., 2022).

Despite its transformative potential, digitalisation also introduces new challenges that may deepen existing inequalities in rural tourism. Many rural areas continue to suffer from inadequate internet infrastructure and low levels of digital literacy, which hinder the adoption and utilisation of digital tools (Darma et al., 2023). As a result, rural tourism actors may be excluded from key digital markets, weakening their visibility and economic performance. To counteract these disparities, scholars advocate for targeted digital inclusion strategies that include infrastructure investment, stakeholder training, and context-sensitive digital marketing practices (Abidin et al., 2022; Monda et al., 2023). Empowering local communities through digital literacy programs can enable them to participate more actively in tourism promotion and governance, ensuring that digital transformation becomes a catalyst—not a barrier—for sustainable rural development.

Sustainable Tourism Practices and Environmental Considerations

Sustainability has emerged as a normative imperative in tourism development, particularly in rural contexts where the balance between economic growth, ecological preservation, and socio-cultural continuity is often delicate. Sustainable rural tourism emphasises low-impact practices, conservation of natural resources, and the reinforcement of local stewardship, ensuring that tourism benefits do not come at the expense of long-term environmental and cultural degradation. Central to this approach is the monitoring and mitigation of tourism's ecological footprint, which includes managing waste, minimising habitat disturbance, and controlling infrastructural expansion that may threaten rural landscapes (Koyuncu, 2024). Poorly regulated tourism can accelerate environmental degradation, particularly in regions lacking adequate institutional capacity to implement sustainability standards (Ehigiamusoe et al., 2022).

The integration of carbon-conscious strategies is becoming increasingly central in the sustainability discourse. Scholars argue that rural tourism must adopt transparent measurement and reporting of tourism-related emissions to guide decarbonization efforts effectively (Conefrey & Hanrahan, 2022; Popović et al., 2025). This involves incorporating eco-friendly transport options, green accommodations, and carbon offset programs, which not only reduce the environmental impact but also align rural destinations with global sustainability targets. Importantly, these measures are most effective when embedded within a systemic policy framework that addresses both environmental and socio-economic priorities of the host communities.

Technology has also been recognised as a catalyst in advancing sustainable tourism practices. The application of artificial intelligence and digital monitoring tools can optimise resource management, streamline waste processing, and personalise low-impact visitor experiences (Zhao, 2025). Beyond technological solutions, local stewardship remains crucial, as it empowers communities to manage tourism in accordance with their ecological and cultural priorities, ensuring that development remains locally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. As shown by Ede et al. (2025), community engagement in preserving architectural heritage not only supports sustainability but also enhances social cohesion and local economic vitality. Together, these approaches underscore that sustainability in rural tourism is most effectively achieved through a convergence of ecological sensitivity, technological innovation, and community-driven governance.

Strategic Planning and Destination Readiness

Strategic planning is fundamental to the development of sustainable rural tourism, particularly in ensuring that destination readiness is aligned with both internal capacities and external market demands. Destination readiness encompasses critical dimensions, including infrastructure quality, human resource capacity, policy coherence, and digital connectivity. A strategic framework enables stakeholders to prioritise development goals, assess risks and opportunities, and implement adaptive interventions based on evidence-driven analyses. In rural contexts, where tourism initiatives often operate under constraints, structured planning is essential to ensure that investments are targeted and outcomes are sustainable. Tools such as SWOT, PEST, and other strategic matrices provide comprehensive diagnostics that inform coordinated policy and investment decisions (Singalen, 2023).

Infrastructure remains a cornerstone of destination readiness, particularly in rural areas where physical and digital connectivity are often underdeveloped. Robust infrastructure not only enhances the visitor experience but also facilitates operational efficiency, market access, and integration with broader tourism circuits

(Wartono et al., 2022). Equally critical is the role of human capital; the capacity and quality of local human resources directly impact service delivery, tourist satisfaction, and long-term competitiveness. Investments in training and partnerships with educational institutions are crucial for developing a skilled workforce that can meet the evolving demands of the tourism industry (Adda, 2022). Without these foundational components, rural destinations risk stagnation despite having rich cultural or natural assets.

Beyond infrastructure and human resources, policy coherence and participatory governance are integral to successful strategic planning. Effective alignment between national, regional, and local tourism policies provides clarity and direction for stakeholders, whereas fragmented or inconsistent policy frameworks often lead to inefficiencies and conflicts (Pato & Duque, 2023). Strategic adaptability is also crucial, as tourism is highly sensitive to market fluctuations and environmental risks. Plans must be dynamic, responding to shifting socio-economic and ecological conditions (Liang et al., 2023). Moreover, fostering community involvement in strategic processes not only promotes equity but also ensures that tourism development reflects local aspirations and strengthens social cohesion (Zárate-Altamirano et al., 2022). In sum, strategic planning serves as both a roadmap and a governance mechanism, guiding rural tourism toward inclusive, resilient, and context-sensitive growth.

METHODS

This study employed a desk-based research approach to conduct a quantitative SWOT analysis on the development readiness of rural tourism in West Java. Rather than relying on primary fieldwork, the research synthesised data from a variety of credible secondary sources, including official government publications (such as those from BPS Jawa Barat and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy), regional development plans, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and international development reports from organisations like UNWTO and OECD. Documents were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency (published between 2018 and 2025), with a focus on studies and reports directly addressing rural tourism infrastructure, policy frameworks, environmental conditions, and community-based practices in West Java. A total of 45 documents were reviewed and subjected to thematic analysis, where key insights were extracted, coded, and mapped into a structured SWOT matrix.

The SWOT framework in this study was structured around 20 indicators—10 internal (strengths and weaknesses) and 10 external (opportunities and threats)—identified through a systematic content analysis of the literature. Internal factors included issues such as human resource capacity, infrastructure availability, and community engagement, while external factors comprised trends in tourist preferences, policy support, environmental vulnerabilities, and market dynamics. Each factor was assigned a weight (ranging from 0.00 to 1.00) based on its frequency and emphasis in the literature, reflecting its relative significance. Ratings (on a scale of 1 to 4) were then assigned to reflect the perceived strength or threat level of each factor, derived from a comparative analysis of the documents. Weighted scores were calculated by multiplying each factor's weight and rating, and the cumulative scores were used to generate Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE) matrices.

The resulting matrices were used to plot the strategic positioning of rural tourism in West Java within a conventional SWOT strategy matrix, identifying whether the region falls within an aggressive, conservative, defensive, or competitive quadrant. This mapping facilitated the formulation of strategic recommendations aligned with the region's tourism potential and development constraints. While the desk study approach provides comprehensive insights and avoids the logistical constraints of field research, it also faces limitations in data consistency, granularity, and the subjectivity involved in scoring and weighting factors. To mitigate these challenges, cross-source triangulation and transparent analytical procedures were employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identification of SWOT Factors

The initial phase of the analysis involved identifying and categorising strategic factors that influence the development of rural tourism in West Java. Based on a comprehensive desk study, 20 key factors were classified into internal and external categories. The internal factors encompass both strengths and weaknesses inherent to the management and resources of rural tourism villages, while external factors comprise opportunities and threats that originate from the broader socio-political and environmental context. Among the identified strengths, the richness of cultural and natural assets emerged as a prominent advantage, positioning West Java's rural destinations as attractive for domestic and international tourists. Community participation in tourism activities and village-led initiatives also enhances the authenticity and resilience of local tourism

models. Institutional support through government-led programs, such as the "Desa Wisata" scheme, has further bolstered the destination's visibility and legitimacy. In contrast, notable weaknesses include the inadequacy of basic and digital infrastructure, limited human resource capacity in hospitality and digital marketing, and a dependency on external funding sources for tourism operations and promotion.

On the external side, opportunities were identified in shifting post-pandemic tourism preferences favouring outdoor and rural-based experiences, increasing integration of digital technologies in tourism services, and expanding partnerships with private sector actors and digital platforms. However, threats persist in the form of environmental degradation resulting from unregulated tourism growth, vulnerability to climate-related disasters, policy fragmentation across governance levels, and increasing competition from urban and artificial destinations. These factors are summarized in Table 1, which presents the complete SWOT analysis derived from a comprehensive literature review.

Table 1. SWOT Factors Influencing Rural Tourism Development in West Java

Category	Code	Factor
Strengths	S1	Rich cultural and natural tourism assets
	S2	Active community participation in tourism initiatives
	S3	Support from national and regional tourism programs
	S4	Strong local identity and cultural narratives
	S5	Integration with agro-ecological practices
Weaknesses	W1	Poor physical and digital infrastructure
	W2	Limited managerial and human resource capacities
	W3	Weak marketing and digital promotion strategies
	W4	Financial dependence on government or donor programs
	W5	Lack of standardised visitor services and facilities
Opportunities	O1	Post-pandemic preference for nature-based and less crowded destinations
	O2	Growth of digital platforms and tourism technologies
	O3	Potential for PPPs (Public-Private Partnerships) in tourism investment
	O4	Policy support for sustainable tourism and village-based development
	O5	Emerging eco-tourism and creative economy markets
Threats	T1	Environmental degradation from unchecked development
	T2	Exposure to climate risks and natural disasters
	T3	Fragmented policy implementation across administrative levels
	T4	Competition with urban/artificial destinations
	T5	Risk of cultural commodification and loss of authenticity

Source: Research data, 2025

Quantitative SWOT Matrix Analysis

To assess the strategic positioning of rural tourism in West Java, each of the identified SWOT factors was evaluated quantitatively through a structured weighting and scoring process. This method enables an objective assessment of the relative significance and Influence of each factor in shaping tourism development outcomes. Following standard SWOT quantification procedures, each factor was assigned a weight ranging from 0.00 to 1.00, with the total weights for internal and external factors each summing to 1.00. Subsequently, each factor was assigned a rating from 1 to 4, where 1 indicated a significant weakness or threat and 4 indicated a major strength or opportunity. The weighted score was calculated by multiplying the weight for each factor by its corresponding rating.

The results of this quantification are presented in Tables 2 and 3, representing the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE) matrices, respectively. The IFE matrix shows that strengths such as cultural richness (S1) and community participation (S2) received high ratings, reflecting their central role in supporting sustainable tourism. In contrast, weaknesses related to infrastructure (W1) and digital capacity (W3) received lower ratings and relatively high weights, emphasising their strategic urgency. The total IFE score reached 2.85, indicating a moderate-to-strong internal position, suggesting that rural tourism in West Java has more strengths than weaknesses, but still requires internal improvements to maximise performance.

Table 2. Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix for Rural Tourism in West Java

Factor Code	Description	Weight	Rating	Score
S1	Rich cultural and natural assets	0.12	4	0.48
S2	Active community participation	0.10	4	0.40
S3	Support from national/regional programs	0.08	3	0.24

Factor Code	Description	Weight	Rating	Score
S4	Strong local identity and narratives	0.06	3	0.18
S5	Integration with agro-ecological practices	0.05	3	0.15
W1	Poor infrastructure	0.12	2	0.24
W2	Limited human resource capacity	0.10	2	0.20
W3	Weak digital marketing	0.09	2	0.18
W4	Financial dependence	0.08	1	0.08
W5	Lack of service standardization	0.10	2	0.20
Total		1.00		2.85

Source: Research data, 2025

As shown in Table 3, the EFE matrix reveals a relatively strong opportunity profile. Key opportunities, such as an increased preference for nature-based travel (O1), growth in digital tourism platforms (O2), and policy alignment (O4), scored particularly high. At the same time, threats such as environmental degradation (T1) and fragmented policies (T3) were identified as high-priority external risks. The total EFE score reached 3.10, positioning West Java's rural tourism in a strategic environment rich in opportunities. This suggests that with the right interventions, stakeholders can capitalise on favourable trends to address internal weaknesses and secure competitive advantages.

Table 3. External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix for Rural Tourism in West Java

Factor Code	Description	Weight	Rating	Score
O1	Preference for nature-based tourism	0.14	4	0.56
O2	Expansion of digital tourism platforms	0.12	4	0.48
O3	Opportunities for PPP investment	0.10	3	0.30
O4	Policy support for sustainable tourism	0.10	4	0.40
O5	Growth in eco-tourism and creative markets	0.09	3	0.27
T1	Environmental degradation	0.14	2	0.28
T2	Climate vulnerability	0.09	2	0.18
T3	Fragmented governance	0.10	2	0.20
T4	Competition from urban destinations	0.07	2	0.14
T5	Risk of cultural commodification	0.05	2	0.10
Total		1.00		3.10

Source: Research data, 2025

Strategic Implications and Recommendations

The SWOT matrix analysis places rural tourism development in West Java within the aggressive strategy quadrant (Quadrant I), indicating that the region possesses a strong internal foundation and is currently situated in an opportunity-rich external environment. This strategic position requires stakeholders to actively leverage their existing strengths to capture emerging opportunities and accelerate sustainable development outcomes. Such a position requires proactive, growth-oriented strategies that emphasise innovation, community empowerment, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Given the strong cultural and ecological assets (S1), coupled with increasing demand for nature-based tourism experiences (O1), one key strategic recommendation is the development of localised tourism products that integrate traditional arts, agro-ecological practices, and immersive cultural experiences. These offerings should be marketed through digitally optimised platforms (O2), allowing for wider visibility and targeting niche markets. Community-led storytelling and branding can further enhance authenticity while strengthening social cohesion.

To address infrastructure and service limitations (W1, W5), while capitalising on policy support (O4) and investment opportunities (O3), it is essential to pursue public-private partnerships (PPPs) that aim to develop tourism facilities and enhance connectivity. These partnerships can be structured to ensure community benefit-sharing while maintaining environmental safeguards. Complementary to this, capacity-building programs should be institutionalised to enhance local human resource competencies in tourism operations, digital marketing, and sustainable practices, thereby mitigating internal weaknesses (W2, W3) while responding to evolving visitor expectations. Environmental risks (T1, T2) and policy fragmentation (T3) require a more systemic response. Strategies should include the integration of local environmental management plans into tourism operations, with community involvement in conservation and monitoring activities. Simultaneously, governance reforms are needed to enhance inter-agency coordination and harmonise policies across administrative levels. This will help prevent institutional overlap and ensure coherence in strategic planning. To reinforce cultural resilience in the face of commodification risks (T5), local governments and tourism stakeholders should promote ethical tourism standards that prioritise cultural preservation, respect

for local community norms, and effective visitor education. These standards must be embedded within broader rural tourism frameworks to ensure that growth is not only economically viable but also socially and environmentally responsible.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that rural tourism in West Java occupies a strategic position, characterised by a strong internal base and favourable external conditions. This aligns with previous research indicating that destinations with rich cultural and ecological assets, combined with community engagement and institutional support, are well-positioned to respond to shifts in tourism demand, particularly toward nature-based and authentic experiences. The placement in the aggressive strategy quadrant further underscores the potential for leveraging internal strengths to harness external opportunities, reaffirming the findings of Ai (2024) and Liu et al. (2023), who argue that place-based tourism initiatives anchored in local knowledge and identity can yield significant development benefits. However, the analysis also reveals structural vulnerabilities—particularly in infrastructure, digital competence, and institutional coherence—that require targeted interventions. These findings align with those of Ratnasari et al. (2023) and Utasih et al. (2023), who identified similar barriers in other rural tourism contexts. The limited capacity in digital promotion, for instance, weakens destination competitiveness in an increasingly digital tourism economy. At the same time, community involvement, while strong in participatory values, is often constrained by skill gaps and funding limitations. This duality presents both a challenge and an opportunity: internal assets must be supported by systematic capacity-building and infrastructure investment to activate their potential fully.

From a policy perspective, the results suggest that rural tourism development cannot be treated as an isolated sectoral initiative. Instead, it must be embedded within integrated rural development frameworks that encompass environmental governance, cultural preservation, and economic diversification. The strong scores on external factors such as policy support and market demand confirm the timeliness of aligning national tourism policies with local development goals. However, the presence of threats such as environmental degradation and policy fragmentation highlights the importance of inter-agency coordination and adaptive regulatory mechanisms. These issues are consistent with the concerns raised by Liang et al. (2023) and Pato & Duque (2023), who emphasised the need for strategic flexibility and institutional synergy in sustainable tourism governance. Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of how strategic planning tools, such as quantitative SWOT analyses, can be effectively applied using secondary data to assess destination readiness. It demonstrates that even in the absence of extensive fieldwork, desk studies can yield nuanced insights when grounded in systematic evaluation. Practically, the study offers a replicable model for other regions with similar socio-cultural and environmental profiles. The integration of empirical evidence with strategic frameworks strengthens both the analytical rigor and actionable relevance of the findings, making them valuable for planners, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the strategic readiness of rural tourism development in West Java through a desk-based quantitative SWOT analysis. The findings indicate that the region possesses a strong internal capacity—rooted in cultural richness, community participation, and institutional support—while also facing a highly favourable external environment characterised by shifts in tourism demand, digital opportunities, and policy support. The total IFE and EFE scores position rural tourism in West Java within the aggressive strategy quadrant, suggesting that it is well-placed to pursue proactive, growth-oriented interventions that align with sustainability goals.

Despite these advantages, the study also reveals critical weaknesses in infrastructure, digital capability, and administrative coherence that may hinder long-term development if not strategically addressed. Environmental risks and governance fragmentation further complicate the implementation of inclusive tourism strategies. Thus, while rural tourism in West Java holds significant promise, realising its full potential requires integrated planning, targeted capacity building, public-private collaboration, and community-led governance.

Theoretically, the research demonstrates the applicability of quantitative SWOT analysis in assessing tourism development potential using secondary data, offering a scalable model for other regions. Practically, it provides actionable insights for policymakers, tourism managers, and local communities aiming to design evidence-based strategies for sustainable rural tourism. Future research may enrich this approach through longitudinal analyses or by integrating digital sentiment data and geospatial mapping to enhance destination intelligence.

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