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THE ROLE OF OPINION LEADER IN COMMUNICATION PARTICIPATION IN THE GREEN TOURISM VILLAGE OF BILEBANTE-CENTRAL LOMBOK

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Abstract

This study analyzes the role of opinion leaders in the transformation of Bilibante Green Tourism Village in Central Lombok, examining participatory communication and the challenges faced. Using a qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and documentation, the findings indicate that the role of opinion leaders can be divided into three eras: pre-transformation, transformation, and post-transformation. Inclusive communication strategies and the use of communication technologies were effective in encouraging community participation. Challenges included differing opinions and resistance to authority. The study concludes that opinion leaders successfully activated community participation but require further improvement in communication and overall community engagement..

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A. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has shifted from mass tourism focusing on sea, sand, and sun to alternative tourism that offers natural surroundings and local culture, including rural tourism that highlights local wisdom and village activities. The concept of a tourism village prioritizes local community participation in managing tourist attractions. According to MENKO MARVES RI (2021, p. 184), a Tourism Village is an area with unique tourism attraction potential supported by the local community, capable of combining various attractions and facilities to attract tourists. The Indonesian government has issued Regulation No. 4 of 2016 by the Minister of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions Development, and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia regarding Tourism Village Development (JDIH & BPK, 2016), which aims to support economic independence and empower local communities through tourism villages.

West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) has 274 tourism villages spread across all regencies and cities, classified as pioneering, developing, advanced, and independent. Out of 41 tourism villages in Central Lombok Regency, only Bilebante Green Tourism Village holds advanced status (JADESTA KEMENPAREKRAF, 2024). According to the MENKO MARVES RI Handbook (2021, p. 53), an advanced tourism village must meet five elements: superior human resources, attractions, activities, amenities, and accessibility. Superior human resources involve enhancing the skills and knowledge of the village community. Attractions should offer unique tourist experiences. Daily activities create memorable cultural interactions. Amenities support tourists' needs to fully enjoy the attractions, and accessibility ensures ease for tourists visiting the tourism village (Ariani, 2018).

In developing tourism villages, participatory communication becomes an inseparable element. According to Altafin (1991), participatory communication is a means to build mutual understanding, facilitate dialogue among various parties, and encourage collaboration in planning, implementing, and evaluating social development programs. Mak et al. (2017) defines participatory communication as a communication process involving the active and continuous participation of various stakeholders in decision-making related to sustainable tourism development.

Participatory communication in the context of sustainable tourism requires the acceptance of local community opinions in planning and developing tourist destinations (GDRC, 1995). This has proven effective in increasing visitor numbers, income, and the quality of life for local communities (Bălan & Burghilea, 2015). However, community participation in tourism development often faces obstacles, such as lack of equal representation in decision-making (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Marzuki, 2015).

One important element in participatory communication is the presence of opinion leaders. Valente & Pumpuang (2007) define opinion leaders as individuals who can influence the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of others. Everett M. Rogers (2010) adds that opinion leaders can influence the opinions or behaviors of others using their methods and have a dominant level of participation and influence. Gretzel (2018) describes opinion leaders as trusted individuals who provide advice and influence others' opinions, playing a key role in participatory communication and decision-making, especially in managing tourism villages.

The Two-Step Flow of Communication model introduced by Lazarsfeld et al. (1968) indicates that information is first received by opinion leaders before being disseminated to the masses. They act as information filters, simplifying and interpreting messages before conveying them to others. Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2010) explains that opinion leaders serve as change agents who overcome uncertainty related to innovation adoption, accelerating diffusion by adopting innovations and encouraging others to follow. The Multistep Flow Theory expands this concept by suggesting that information flow occurs through various channels and stages involving multiple opinion leaders (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955 in Hepp, 2019).

Network Theory emphasizes the importance of social networks in information dissemination, where opinion leaders are at the center of social networks and facilitate information flow through interpersonal relationships (Burt, 1999). The Agenda-Setting Theory by McCombs & Shaw (1972) states that the media not only determines important topics but also shapes how the public thinks about them. Opinion leaders direct public attention to specific issues they deem important, influencing the public agenda and community decisions.

The characteristics and types of opinion leaders can vary depending on the context and characteristics of the local community (Abas et al., 2022). A study by Mak et al. (2017) identifies that opinion leaders tend to have extensive knowledge about tourism and the environment, as well as good relationships with the local community and stakeholders. They demonstrate a high commitment to sustainable tourism development, influence and mobilize community participation, and serve as sources of inspiration in advancing sustainable tourism in China.

In tourism, opinion leaders play an important role in the sustainability of tourist destinations. They must be able to communicate with the community to manage tourism collaboratively and participatively, and with tourists to expand marketing (Jamrozy et al., 1996). Xu et al. (2017) state that confrontational leadership in discussion forums is also important to find the best solutions in developing tourism villages. Opinion leaders must also be able to act as facilitators in making policies that benefit the community.

Appropriate and practical types of opinion leaders in leadership help formulate policies in aspects of tourism, social, political, and economic fields (Wang, 2019). The charismatic leadership of influential opinion leaders significantly affects community development and empowerment (Aguzman et al., 2021). Effective leadership must understand local community needs, develop good relationships with stakeholders, and design tourism development strategies that align with local conditions. Transformational leadership is needed to motivate and empower local communities in developing tourism (Maulana & Ramadanty, 2020; Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2014).

Local champions possess characteristics such as being trustworthy, resilient, independent, patient, excellent communicators, disciplined, knowledgeable, visionary, proactive, enthusiastic, and sensitive (Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009). Abas et al. (2022) add that the main characteristics and roles of local champions include visioning, affiliating, altruistic, and autonomous. Visioning is the ability to have a clear vision of tourism village development. Affiliating is the ability to build strong networks with various stakeholders. Altruistic indicates an orientation towards community welfare, and autonomous refers to the ability to work independently and take initiative (Saufi, 2022).

Bahfiarti (2016) classifies the role of opinion leaders in accelerating innovation adoption in the cocoa agriculture sector. Opinion leaders act as information sources for farmer groups and have technological knowledge and skills to transfer knowledge to other group members. Their roles include searching, discovering, utilizing, and disseminating various agricultural innovations.

However, despite the importance of the above models, types, and characteristics of opinion leaders in developing tourism villages, very little research has been conducted on the role of opinion leaders in tourism village development. No research has predominantly highlighted the role of opinion leaders from the inception of a tourism village or participatory tourism through the concept of participatory communication. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the role of opinion leaders in the transformation of Bilebante Green Tourism Village in Central Lombok, analyze the participatory communication of opinion leaders in activating community participation in managing the tourism village, and analyze the obstacles and challenges faced by opinion leaders in activating community participation in managing the Bilebante Green Tourism Village in Central Lombok.

This study highlights the crucial role of opinion leaders in participatory communication, which significantly contributes to the transformation of Bilebante Green Tourism Village from a sand mining village into a sustainable and internationally recognized tourist destination. Through an in-depth analysis of how opinion leaders facilitate citizen participation, this research fills a gap in the literature regarding their strategic role in the development of tourism villages. The academic contribution of this study lies in the development of theories and models of participatory communication, which can serve as references for further research in the fields of tourism communication and village tourism management. Practically, these findings provide guidance for local governments, local communities, and other stakeholders in designing effective communication strategies to activate community participation in managing and promoting tourism villages, as well as enhancing the success of other village development programs.

B. METHODS

This study employs a constructivist paradigm as a foundation to understand the transformation of Bilebante Green Tourism Village from a sand mining area into a sustainable village in Indonesia. This paradigm is chosen for its emphasis on empathy and dialectical interaction between the researcher and informants, aiding in the reconstruction of facts and the understanding of social constructs (Kriyantono, 2021). Through this paradigm, the researcher focuses on the role of opinion leaders in participatory communication, aiming to identify the opinion leaders, analyze their communication, and identify the obstacles they face.

An exploratory qualitative approach is used in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena (Creswell, 2014), with a focus on the role of opinion leaders, participatory communication, obstacles, and challenges. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Bryman, 2012). Informants were selected purposively, considering village heads, opinion leaders, and involved community members (Miles et al., 2018). Data analysis was conducted interactively until data saturation, following stages of data collection, condensation, display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2018). With this approach, it is expected that a deep understanding of the role of opinion leaders in participatory communication in Bilebante Village can be achieved.

In more detail, the determination of informants in this study used purposive sampling to obtain relevant data (Saldana et al., 2018; Creswell, 2018). Informants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) The Village Head for insights into policies and strategies for developing the Bilebante Green Tourism Village; 2) The opinion leader, PA, to gain an in-depth understanding of PA's role, communication, and challenges; 3) Four individuals categorized as Local Champions of the village to explore the role of the opinion leader; 4) Four individuals close to the opinion leader selected based on their knowledge of the phenomenon to understand the dynamics of role and communication; 5) Four community members actively involved in the tourism village to gain perspectives from direct experiences; and 6) Four general community members who are not actively participating and selected randomly to identify barriers to participation. These criteria ensure comprehensive and relevant data for analyzing the role of

the opinion leader in participatory communication in Bilebante Green Tourism Village.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section specifically reviews and discusses the role of the opinion leader, Pahrul Azim (PA), who also serves as the local champion of the village and holds the position of Director of the Bilebante Green Tourism Village in the transformation of Bilebante Village. It analyzes PA's participatory communication in activating community participation in managing the tourism village and examines the communication barriers and challenges faced by PA in efforts to activate community participation in managing the Bilebante Green Tourism Village in Central Lombok.

Category 1: The Role of Opinion Leaders in Village Transformation

1. Initiator

In formulating the tourism development concept for Bilebante Green Tourism Village, the opinion leader (PA) acts as an initiator, shaping the village's future vision and mobilizing active citizen participation. The PA creates an inspiring narrative about the village's future, highlighting the benefits of transformation to boost community morale (Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2014). Based on transformational leadership (Maulana & Ramadanty, 2020) and charismatic leadership (Aguzman et al., 2021), which can inspire and motivate, these elements are crucial for mobilizing community support. In this context, the PA opens dialogues with the community to raise awareness of the need for change and understand their aspirations, as noted by Anandita (2017) and Mak et al. (2017). The PA leverages their credibility and influence to convey the urgency of change, highlight potential benefits, and outline the positive impacts that can be achieved, in line with the perspectives of Maulana & Ramadanty (2020). Additionally, the PA serves as a mediator, facilitating dialogue between the community and the government, and addressing obstacles that may arise during the transformation process.

The PA's approach to formulating the tourism concept also reflects a sensitivity to economic opportunities arising from the community's interest in seaweed processing in Bilebante Village. Recognizing the potential for tourism

visits, the PA and other Local Champions took proactive steps by converting residents' homes into homestays to provide lodging for visitors. This initiative aligns with the idea of charismatic leadership that lays the foundation for community participation in the empowerment process (Aguzman et al., 2021). The inspirational narrative crafted by the PA about the village's future helps overcome uncertainty and unites the community towards the vision of developing Bilebante Green Tourism Village, as emphasized by Pröbstl-Haider et al. (2014). Thus, the tourism development concept formulated by the PA not only leverages economic opportunities but also strengthens community participation in village management.

2. Catalyst for Progress

The discussion in this study highlights the crucial role of the opinion leader (PA) as a catalyst, an agent that accelerates and facilitates positive change in developing the Bilebante Green Tourism Village. The PA not only mobilizes resources and enhances community capacity but also establishes strong networks and collaborations with various stakeholders, including the government and international organizations such as GIZ and Bappenas. By organizing comparative study visits to other tourism villages, the PA enables knowledge transfer and the adoption of best practices in this village. The PA's role is also evident in advocating for skills training and providing supportive infrastructure that enhances the community's competence in managing and promoting tourism.

These findings are consistent with Rogers' (2010) theory on the strategic role of opinion leaders in driving new initiatives and the transformational leadership theory that emphasizes the importance of community empowerment (Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2014; Maulana & Ramadanty, 2020). Furthermore, the PA acts as a change agent who not only motivates active community participation but also ensures the creation of inclusive policies through participatory communication and open dialogue (Freire, 1970). In the post-transformation era, the PA's ability to initiate and facilitate synergy among different stakeholders creates conducive conditions for sustainable and inclusive growth of the tourism sector, making them a key driver in the development of Bilebante Green Tourism Village.

In practice, as a catalyst, the PA also builds networks with the government and the private sector, laying the groundwork for the development of the tourism village. In this regard, the opinion leader facilitates dialogue between the community and stakeholders, ensuring collaboration that supports village tourism (Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2014). The PA's transformational leadership inspires the community to actively participate in village management. This leadership is vital in driving development initiatives and creating conditions conducive to the growth of the village tourism sector (Altafin, 1991; Masilela, 1989).

3. Fostering and Encouraging Community Engagement

The opinion leader (PA) in Bilebante Village plays a crucial role in fostering community engagement through persuasive and inclusive communication strategies focused on capacity building and skill development. Consistent with previous research by Anandita (2017), the PA organizes participatory activities such as workshops and community meetings to involve residents in decision-making and the implementation of village initiatives. The PA adopts an inclusive approach in two hamlets with different cultures and beliefs, namely Jenggala Hamlet and Karang Kubu Hamlet. By considering the cultural and religious diversity, the PA ensures that persuasive messages are well received by the entire community of these two hamlets, demonstrating the PA's sensitivity to social and cultural contexts, which is crucial for maintaining positive relationships and community participation (Mak et al., 2017).

In the post-transformation era, the PA continues to use the same communication strategies to maintain community participation in managing the tourism village by organizing various participatory activities as platforms for engaging residents in decision-making and the implementation of tourism village initiatives (Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2014; Maulana & Ramadanty, 2020). A communication approach sensitive to cultural and religious diversity, as applied in Jenggala and Karang Kubu Hamlets, remains key in ensuring that the community feels a sense of ownership and actively contributes to the development of the tourism village. These findings are supported by Freire's (1970) dialogical communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of education and dialogical communication in raising critical consciousness within the community, ultimately enhancing active participation in the transformation process of their

community. Field observations indicate that when the opinion leader employs a dialogical approach that involves listening to and valuing community views, levels of engagement and collaboration are maintained and even increased, leading to greater willingness among community members to actively contribute at every stage of the village development.

4. Mediator

The opinion leader (PA) in Bilebante Village plays a crucial role as a mediator between the community and the government, building effective collaborative relationships (Saufi, 2022). They not only act as the voice of the community but also as a vital bridge connecting the community's aspirations with government policies. The PA's communication and leadership skills enable them to bridge the gap between the two parties in the village transformation process. Interviews with R revealed that the PA serves as the primary link between the community and the government. One informant noted that the PA articulates the community's hopes and concerns to the government and conveys government policies to the community in an understandable manner.

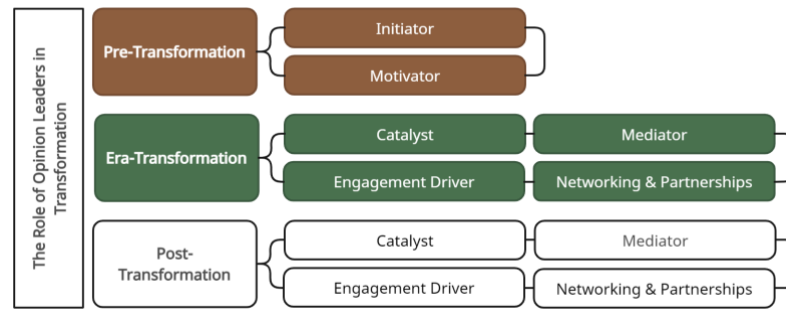
Furthermore, this study uncovers various challenges faced by the PA in their role as a mediator. In the pre-transformation era, conflicts between community members opposing and supporting the cessation of sand mining posed significant challenges. The PA contributed to bridging these differing views by conveying community concerns to the government and explaining policy reasons to the community. During the transformation and post-transformation eras, the PA continued to socialize village programs, ensuring information was received by all parties. The PA also successfully resolved conflicts between homestay owners and Feel Lombok and addressed internal conflicts within the dance team. The PA's success in managing and resolving these conflicts demonstrates the high level of trust placed in them by both parties, reinforcing their role as a reliable mediator.

5. Networking and Partnerships

The opinion leader (PA) in the Green Tourism Village of Bilebante plays a crucial role in building networks and partnerships that support the village's transformation into a sustainable tourism destination (Abas & Halim, 2019; Saufi, 2022). They proactively establish relationships with the government, non-

governmental organizations, and business actors, identifying mutually beneficial collaboration opportunities. Key partners include GIZ, which assists in enhancing community capacity; the Marta Tilaar Beauty Brand, which supports herbal plant processing; and GenPi and travel agencies, which aid in promoting village tourism. Collaboration with government agencies such as Bappenas and Kemenparekraf also supports the village's transformation (Abas & Halim, 2019). Through the active involvement of the PA, the village can leverage external resources for tourism development and community empowerment. This approach is consistent with Ramadhan & Khadiyanto's (2014) findings in Bejiharjo Village, Yogyakarta, where active community participation from the outset, facilitated through collaboration between Pokdarwis and the government, was essential. The partnership between Bilebante Village and the government not only provides funding and technical assistance but also enhances the village's visibility and local capacity in managing tourism (Saufi, 2022).

In the post-transformation era, the PA continues to expand networks with various external parties such as local companies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations, forming strategic partnerships that provide funding and expertise (Saufi, 2022). Examples of these partnerships include financial support and training from Bank BCA and collaborations with marketing platforms like Blibli.com and Atorin.com, demonstrating the PA's commitment to building cross-sector relationships to support the village's tourism development. These partnerships optimize the village's resource potential and broaden its positive impact on sustainable development, creating synergy between the village, the government, and the private sector.



The Role of Opinion Leaders in the Transformation of the Bilebante Green Tourism Village Based on the Masses

While this study describes the role of the opinion leader during the transformation period, the findings align with the characteristics and roles of a local champion as identified by Saufi (2022), which include visioning, affiliating, altruism, and autonomy. Despite this relevance, the study presents a novel finding that the opinion leader possesses characteristics and roles as an initiator, motivator, catalyst, mediator, and affiliator. This dual role is influenced by the PA's position as both an Opinion Leader and a Local Champion during the transformation of the Green Tourism Village of Bilebante.

Category 2: Opinion Leader's Participatory Communication

1. Inclusive Communication Style

Research indicates that the Opinion Leader in the Bilebante Green Tourism Village utilizes an inclusive communication style that encourages community participation. During deliberations, every individual is invited to express their opinions, with PA playing the role of an active listener responsive to community suggestions (Andarani et al., 2018; Bălan & Burghilea, 2015; George Chadwick, 1978; Marpaung, 2016).

PA values every citizen's contribution, fostering a climate of open and positive communication that strengthens harmonious relations between leaders and the community. Mrs. Hajjah Zaenab, a Local Champion, exemplifies this approach with her open and collaborative attitude in deliberations, facilitating inclusive decision-making and supporting village development. This inclusive communication style has proven effective in gathering diverse inputs and supporting joint decisions, creating a harmonious and participatory work

environment crucial for sustainable tourism village development (Chadwick, 1978; Bălan & Burghilea, 2015; Marpaung, 2016; Andarani et al., 2018).

2. NOSTALGIA: Leveraging Success and Inspirational Stories

This section demonstrates that PA in the Bilebante Green Tourism Village utilizes nostalgia techniques in participatory communication. They leverage success stories of the village to build emotional bonds with the community, depicting the village's journey from a humble past to a thriving tourist destination (Chadwick, 1978; Bălan & Burghilea, 2015; Marpaung, 2016; Andarani et al., 2018).

These stories are selected to reflect positive changes and village growth as a result of active community participation, eliciting pride and a sense of ownership among residents. By sharing fond memories and collective achievements, PA sustains community interest and motivation to actively engage in village management. However, the nostalgia technique has limitations in engaging uninvolved community members. To achieve broader participation, more diverse communication strategies and personalized approaches are needed (Saufi, 2022). Although effective in maintaining participation enthusiasm, nostalgia must be complemented by other strategies to achieve greater inclusivity.

3. Direct Engagement

This study demonstrates that the Opinion Leader in the Green Tourism Village of Bilebante employs direct and inclusive engagement strategies through regular deliberation meetings, informal discussions, and participation in various village activities such as communal work and community empowerment. The PA facilitates effective two-way dialogues, enhancing interactions and relationships between the leader and the community, and providing deep insights into the residents' needs (Masilela, 1989). The PA frequently participates in village clean-up activities, guides tourists, and manages tourism operations, ensuring sustainability principles and benefits for all stakeholders. This approach underscores the importance of participatory communication and direct community leader involvement in enhancing sustainability and visitor satisfaction (Mak et al., 2017). It not only fosters emotional closeness between the leader and the community but also highlights the significance of participatory communication strategies in managing the Green Tourism Village of Bilebante.

4. Use of Easily Understandable Language

This study demonstrates that PA uses language that is easily understood by all layers of society in Bilebante Village. PA frequently switches between the Sasak language and Indonesian to bridge comprehension gaps, ensuring broader participation from residents and tourists (Sternthal et al., 1978; Weinberger & Gulas, 1992). The Sasak language is employed to communicate with local residents in addition to the two culturally distinct hamlets in Bilebante Village, namely Dusun Jenggale and Dusun Karang Kubu, while Indonesian is used when interacting with these hamlets and visitors from outside the village. This strategy enables messages conveyed by PA to be clearly understood by all parties, enhancing communication effectiveness and engagement in various village activities.

Furthermore, PA employs storytelling with a touch of light philosophy when interacting with tourists. By weaving stories of the village's history and natural uniqueness into engaging narratives, PA not only conveys information but also effectively communicates the cultural values and history of the village. This approach adds dimensions to tourists' experiences, strengthening their recognition and understanding of the village's cultural and natural heritage. PA uses local stories to explain traditions and local wisdom, fostering an emotional connection between tourists and the village, and enriching the overall tourism experience.

5. Opinion Leader's Participatory Initiatives

Furthermore, this research shows that PA plays a significant persuasive role in transforming initial community attitudes into strong support for village development (Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). Through tangible evidence such as visits from outside the village and village achievements, PA convinces the community of the village's potential as an attractive tourist destination (Saufi, 2022).

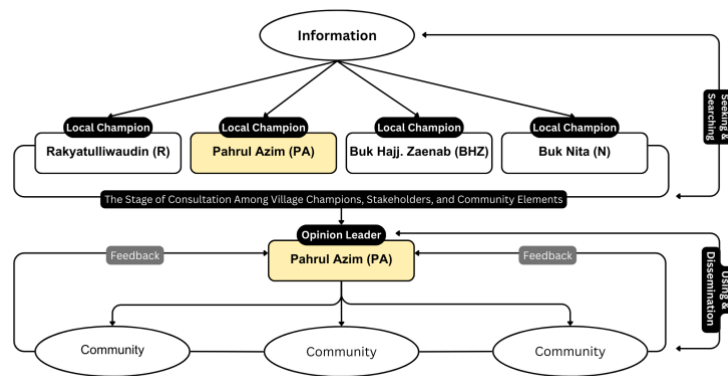
Additionally, PA utilizes incentives such as pocket money and vacation packages to encourage active community participation (Uhl-Bien, 2006). They also serve as information mediators, conveying the latest news and development opportunities to the community (Bahfiarti, 2016; Aguzman et al., 2021). PA's involvement in various aspects of village life is not only as a representative figure

but also as a change agent directly involved in village development (Masilela, 1989). In this way, they create an environment conducive to active participation and community awareness of overall village development.

6. Utilizing Communication Technology

PA utilizes modern communication technology through the bilebante.com website, providing up-to-date information on village development, tourist events, and community participation (Resmi et al., 2024). This website serves as an easily accessible knowledge hub for Bilebante community members and external parties interested in the Green Tourism Village of Bilebante. Additionally, PA also utilizes social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to expand communication reach with residents (Kirářová & Pavlíčka, 2015). Through their social media accounts, PA actively shares information on village development progress and participatory activities, enabling direct interaction between PA and residents.

Overall, the process and role of participatory communication by opinion leaders are described as follows:



Model of Participatory Communication by Opinion Leaders
in Bilebante Green Tourism Village

The findings of this research are relevant to Bahfiarti's (2016) concept of the role of opinion leaders, indicating that participatory communication in Bilebante Green Tourism Village involves steps including information seeking by local champions and PAs, meaning-making from gathered information, utilization for developing participatory strategies, and dissemination of information outcomes to the community. However, this study updates Bahfiarti's 2016 findings by adding a step in the opinion leader communication process, namely

the inclusion of feedback. This process demonstrates effective collaboration in driving participation by involving a comprehensive participatory communication cycle.

The role of participatory communication by opinion leaders in Bilebante Green Tourism Village is concretely manifested through six methods: inclusive communication practices, use of easily understandable language, nostalgic storytelling methods, initiation of participatory initiatives, continuous direct engagement, and utilization of communication technology, all of which are deemed successful in activating community participation.

Category 3: Opinion Leader's Barriers and Challenges

1. Differences in Opinion

Divergent opinions among local champions in the Bilebante Green Tourism Village pose a barrier to participatory communication (Altafin, 1991). Although PA takes steps to create a communicative and collaborative environment among local champions, in line with previous research (Xu et al., 2017), PA allows time to alleviate emotions and approaches local champions openly and inclusively after the atmosphere calms down, facilitating constructive dialogue and joint solution identification. These steps aim to restore cooperation, address conflicts, and reach beneficial agreements (Altafin, 1991). This may pose challenges in reaching optimal agreements, hindering the village's ability to achieve consensus for desired transformations quickly and timely.

2. Authority Resistance to Opinion Leader

Some community members show resistance to directives from PA due to differences in values and dissatisfaction with final decisions (Grojean et al., 2004). Interview results and observations indicate that some management members in Bilebante Green Tourism Village resisted PA's directive to integrate marketing media on the website and Instagram social media. This resistance stemmed from misunderstandings not fully addressed by PA as the opinion leader. To address this challenge, PA sought support from respected individuals within the community, enhancing legitimacy and acceptance of decisions (Aguzman et al., 2021). Involving influential figures proved effective in increasing community engagement and support.

However, this strategy is temporary and does not resolve the issue comprehensively. Previous research highlights that unresolved issues or delays can negatively impact trust and harmony within the community (Giordano et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial for PA to effectively and timely resolve issues to prevent further escalation of conflicts.

3. Unexpected Circumstances

There are unforeseen concrete barriers to participation in the Bilebante Green Tourism Village, such as the disengagement of a village youth who plays a role as a dancer due to internal conflicts (Rahmawati et al., 2016). As an opinion leader, Pahrul Azim directly mediated at the youth's home, involving all parties including the family concerned (Aguzman et al., 2021). The next step, inviting all dancers on vacation together, demonstrates wisdom in restoring relationships and strengthening solidarity (Rahmawati et al., 2016). With concrete steps such as mediation and communal activities, PA successfully rebuilds solidarity and camaraderie in the community, reaffirming its central role in overcoming participatory barriers (Aguzman et al., 2021).

4. Incomplete Community Participation

Community participation in the transformation of the Bilebante Green Tourism Village is still limited, due to busyness, lack of awareness, understanding, and interest (Nicely & Sydnor, 2015). This challenge underscores the need for holistic and participatory-oriented strategies to increase community involvement in local development (Nicely & Sydnor, 2015). A comprehensive and sustainable approach is needed to motivate and involve the entire community in the transformation process.

E. CONCLUSION

In this study, the role of opinion leaders in the transformation of the Bilebante Green Tourism Village can be summarized into three main phases: pre-transformation, transformation, and post-transformation. Opinion leaders act as initiators of initial participation, catalysts driving community involvement, and continue their role in advancing the village after transformation. Communication strategies used by opinion leaders include the use of inclusive communication styles, success stories, direct engagement, and modern communication technology. Although successful, some barriers such as differences in opinions

among local champions and resistance to the authority of opinion leaders still need to be overcome. To enhance the effectiveness of communication and community participation overall, it is recommended that opinion leaders be more proactive in building internal and external communication, increasing active community participation, and expanding the use of communication technology.

Further research is also recommended to explore the role of opinion leaders in different contexts, conduct more in-depth studies on the long-term effects of opinion leader communication strategies, and utilize quantitative approaches to obtain broader and more representative data on community participation. These findings have important implications in communication theory, participation, and social networks, but research limitations such as time constraints, sample size, geography, and data also need to be acknowledged.

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