



OA'ANA CAVE OPTIMIZATION AS A NEW AND POTENTIAL LOCAL TOURISM DESTINATION AS PART OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN KUANHEUN VILLAGE - WEST KUPANG, NTT

Oleh

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Abstract: *Higher Education students through students' community service actively participate in the development of a village through mentoring, empowering, and raising community awareness of the area's potential. Kuanheun Village located in West Kupang District, Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Kuanheun Community is a village with natural potential for tourism development. However, there are still tourist attractions that are isolated and unknown to visitors, for instance, the Oa'ana Cave (small water cave). Students from Widya Mandira Catholic University in Community Empowerment Program worked hard to build Kuanheun's tourist village: tourist site, replanting surrounding tourist sites, designing Oa'ana Cave (small water cave) tourist attractions, and optimizing the use of social media as an information and promotion medium. Thus, numerous KKN work initiatives can assist promote Kuanheun Village's tourism potential.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important factors in the development of an area. It has been widely noticed that most powerful of the tourism spots or destinations are located in the rural villages. Tourism Village Program is now becoming a pattern for local authorities in improving the economy of rural communities in an effort to reduce poverty. The notion of village tourism popularizes the village so that it has a profit potential and can stimulate the village community's economy (Sabri & Sari, 2020). There are many previous studies focused on the influence of tourism to Indonesian society (e.g. Andaria et al., 2020; Hendrawati & Sarwidi, 2018; Raharti et al., 2021; Solikhah et al., 2020).

Kuanheun Village is one of the villages in the West Kupang sub-district, which is well known for its many clusters of villages that eventually merged to form one village. Topologically, this village stretches and extends from south to north, covering an area of +2146 Ha, with the following regional boundaries: Bolok Village is to the north, Oetmanunu



Village is to the south, Batakte Village is to the east, and the beach is to the west. Kuanheun Village is divided administratively into 5 sub-villages, 6 community units (RW), and 12 neighborhood units (RT), with each area managed by the officials of the community group.

Kuanheun Village has natural potential that can be used to develop the village as a tourism village. There are many tourist objects in Kuanheun village, including Baliana Beach, Inokiu Beach, Taunesi Cave, and Oaana Cave (New Tourism Object), have been identified as having potential by the students of KKNT-PPM Widya Mandira Catholic University (UNWIRA) Kupang for the period 2021-2022. Oaana Cave is still relatively unknown, with most tourists and even the majority of the local community unaware of its existence. The lack of potential identification and promotion causes the Oa'ana Cave spot to slip under the radar of the countryside. There is a need for identification and mapping in order to select existing potential and manage the tourist spot that have been developed from both the venue and supporting facilities (Wisudawati et al., 2020).

There are sociocultural impacts of tourism (Pramanik & Ingkadijaya, 2018). The society surrounding tourism destinations is healthier; they are more receptive to tourists, have a more open mind, imitate good habits, understand other people's habits, are willing to preserve their own culture (traditional dances, traditional culinary, and heritage), are accepting of differences, are able to meet their basic needs (food, housing, and clothing), and encourage people to participate in tourist activities (Pramanik & Ingkadijaya, 2018). In an initiative to develop and promote Oa'ana Cave nature local tourism in the village, KKNT-PPM UNWIRA Kupang students designed and implemented several community empowerment programs, particularly throughout the spot of tourism in Kuanheun village.

METHOD

The community service of UNWIRA students was done in January-February 2022. The students were separated based on the group placement. The problems were identified primarily through observation, interviews, and discussions with village and community officials.

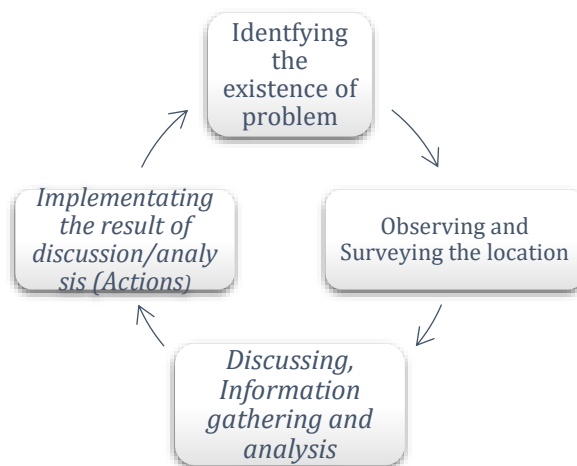


Figure 1. The plot of KKNT-PPM UNWIRA Program

Here are several activities managed by the students from the beginning and with the cooperation of the important parties in the village to support the purpose of the KKNT-PPM UNWIRA 2022:

*Table 1. KKNT-PPM UNWIRA Students Preparing Activities*

No.	Students Activities	Place	Participants
1.	Identifying the problems in a discussion with the head of the village	Administrative Office	UNWIRA students, The officials of the village
2.	Observing the real condition of Oa'ana Cave with	Oa'ana Cave	UNWIRA students, the landlord
3.	Socializing the plans and programs	Village Hall	UNWIRA students, community leaders, village officials
4.	Preparing tools and materials for field action	Students' basecamp	UNWIRA students, Karang Taruna members (Youth Organization)
5.	Opening ceremonial for the optimization of the Oa'ana cave	Oa'ana Cave	The village community members, village officials, landlord, UNWIRA students

The objectives of the program were consistent with UNWIRA's motto, "Ut Vitam Habeant Abundantius," which translates as "so that they have life in abundance." It is a good time to bring soft skills, character, and other theoretical and technical knowledge to "help the community, especially the people in Kuanheun village, so that they are abundant in social and economic life."

RESULT

Several problems and potentials for development in Kuanheun Village were discovered as a result of field observations and interviews with Kuanheun Village officials and the community. These issues and the activities carried out based on the problems are listed in the table below:

Table 2. Problems and Activities implemented by the students

No.	Problems	Activities	Location
1.	There is a potential tourist spot in the village that has not been properly considered, managed, and promoted.	Site survey, Promoting via social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube)	Oa'ana Cave
2.	There is a need for reforestation at several locations, particularly near the potential tourist spot.	Reforestation with several tree seeds	The village



			and saplings	
3.	The village environment arrangement is necessary.		Cleaning some primary locations at the village and around the cave	The village
4.	Waste management is not well known among the locals.		Providing some trash bins in the location	The village

As stated before, this program began from a discussion between students and the Village Head about potential programs to be implemented in Kuanheun Village, West Kupang District, Kupang Regency. Then, students and landlords conducted a site survey. On Sunday, January 30, 2022, DPL went to a tourist location (Bat Cave) with students and community leaders from Kuanheun Village to begin the first step in formally structuring the location. The prayer was led by the religious community leader of Kuanheun Village to kick off the event. This is the first step in transforming the Oaana Bat Cave into a potential tourist attraction, which will significantly benefit the Kuanheun Village community's economy.

Cleaning area and reforestation activities were carried out around the Oa'ana cave. As stated by Pramanik and Ingkadijaya (2018) that protecting the environment is a critical component of sustainable tourism. Before that, preparing tools and materials were done with the help of the community, as well as deploying Karang Taruna (youth organization as the successor of the village). It was the result of an agreement with the village head, community leaders, and landlords. The maintenance was intended to improve access to the cave's entrance, which was previously very constricted. It was done also for refreshing the atmosphere and re-greening the cave area. UNWIRA students also took part of the establishment of POKDARWIS (Tourism Awareness Committee) with the Head of Kuanheun Village and his staff, totaling 50 members, to manage tourist attractions in Kuanheun village, particularly Oa'ana Cave.

UNWIRA students were also promoting the Oa'na cave via online media such as news, opinions, Instagram accounts, and YouTube accounts. The purpose of this publication is to introduce the Oa'ana cave to the entire community as a new tourist destination in Kuanheun Village. In addition to the publications, the students created a layout design of the Oa'ana cave to be used as a reference for the next stage of work. This design was created by students from the Architectural Engineering study program at KKNT-PPM UNWIRA 2022.

Oa'ana Cave is a new tourist attraction in Kuanheun Village, specifically in the V (five) sub-village area. This cave was initially thought to be ordinary by all locals, but it was later discovered to be a nest of snakes, bats, and a very scary place, so no one in Kuanheun Village tried to enter it. Even the majority of the Kuanheun Villagers were unaware of it and had no idea what it was. However, thanks to the identification of tourism potential in Kuanheun Village by KKNT-PPM UNWIRA students, they discovered that this cave has an attraction that can be worked on and used as a new tourist spot in Kuanheun Village. Because there are many unique things in this cave that can entice visitors to come here. One of the cave's



distinguishing features is a natural pool of water at the cave's base. In addition, there are thousands of bats in this cave.

DISCUSSION

Based on discussions with village heads and the landlord, as well as UNWIRA KKNT-PPM students, it was affirmed that the cave would be used as a new tourism destination in Kuanheun Village, alongside other tourist attractions such as Baliana Beach and Lilifuk. Every destination must be planned in order to provide entertainment and attraction to visitors (Kane et al., 2016). Geographical factors play an important role in tourism development planning. The spatial distribution of an object of discussion is closely related to a geographical approach based on the spatial aspect (Oktavia & Hedayani, 2018).

Additionally, the community awareness of the significance of optimizing the location as a proper tourism target must be increased. The community is essential in managing a tourist destination since they play a vital role in planning, managing, developing, and controlling the destination, as well as serving as a central focus for making sustainable decisions (Wisudawati et al., 2020). Kuanheun Village also cannot be considered a tourism village since, while it possesses all of the natural tourism potential necessary for tourism, it has not yet been managed for tourism purposes (Sabri & Sari, 2020). The potential is quite promising if it is managed seriously and with meticulous planning. As a result, the authorities and community must collaborate to discuss ideas to grow their village into a community-based tourism destination. Eventually, conservative efforts must be taken to ensure that the destination continues to exist in the future.

CONCLUSION

Kuanheun Village is in need of a KKNT-PPM placement because it has a lot of potential and needs guidance for community empowerment. For the first time, the KKNT-PPM team from Widya Mandira Kupang University carried out the service, and the results, both directly and indirectly, were expected to be beneficial to the village community and students. One of the programs that has been implemented is the enhancement of the potential tourism destination (Oa'ana Cave) in Kuanheun Village. The process of optimizing the tourism object also poses challenges, as this is a long-term endeavor, and even though it has been promoted via the online platform, the village's authorities should do follow-up actions.

Kuanheun Village's community ought to be ready to cooperate with the government in developing the village and Oa'ana cave into prospective tourism destinations. Kuanheun Community urges the full support of the Kuanheun and Kupang Regency governments in order to develop into a tourism village.

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