

The Role of Village-Owned Enterprises in Improving the Local Economy through Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in improving the local economy of the community surrounding Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism in Lowian Village. This study employed a qualitative research method using a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The study focuses on understanding how BUMDes contributes to the local economy and supports community economic activities. The findings show that BUMDes plays an important role in strengthening the village economy through three main activities: (1) developing Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism as a natural tourist destination characterized by its scenic beauty and unique features; (2) supporting local restaurant businesses that

provide traditional village food and beverages; and (3) facilitating mutual cooperation (gotong royong) activities, including voluntary assistance in house construction, traditional community events, and disaster response. These activities contribute to strengthening local economic participation and creating economic opportunities for the residents of Lowian Village. Therefore, strengthening the institutional and entrepreneurial role of BUMDes is important for supporting sustainable local economic development in the community.

INTRODUCTION

Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) are village-based economic institutions established as an important instrument for promoting local economic self-reliance and community development. They are generally established through village government initiatives, using locally owned assets and resources as initial capital to develop business units whose benefits are ultimately expected to contribute to community welfare. Conceptually, BUMDes serve as institutional mechanisms for harnessing village resources that have not been fully developed, including natural, social, cultural, and human resources, and transforming them into productive economic activities that generate tangible benefits for local residents. The establishment of BUMDes also reflects efforts to strengthen village economic structures so that villages are not merely objects of development but active agents capable of managing their resources and determining the direction of their own development.

Many villages in Indonesia possess abundant natural resources and considerable community skills, yet these resources remain underutilized because of limited access, technology, managerial capacity, and institutional support. BUMDes are intended to address these limitations by organizing local resources into more structured and productive economic activities. Through BUMDes, economic opportunities can be developed and sustained, allowing local communities to obtain longer-term benefits. BUMDes can serve as an institutional extension of village government in managing strategic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, trade, and public services. Thus, BUMDes function not only as business entities but also as drivers of local economic development aimed at expanding economic opportunities and improving community welfare.

The existence of BUMDes is supported by a strong legal framework. Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 39 of 2010 defines BUMDes as village business entities established and

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managed jointly by the village government and the community, with both parties participating as capital owners and business actors. The legal position of BUMDes has also been strengthened through other national regulations, including Law No. 32 of 2004, which was subsequently replaced by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government. These regulations provide villages with greater opportunities to establish and develop businesses based on their respective local potentials. Furthermore, Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages explicitly recognizes the authority of villages to establish BUMDes as village-based economic institutions founded on the principles of kinship and mutual cooperation (see also Antlöv et al., 2016, on the opportunities and risks of the Village Law for village governance). Article 87 further provides that BUMDes may manage various types of businesses serving public interests as well as other economic activities that are appropriate to local community needs.

From a microeconomic perspective, BUMDes have considerable potential to contribute to increases in household income. Jones and Rahel (2022) argue that individual income is influenced by various factors, including business capital, work experience, working hours, and the way economic activities are managed. Accordingly, the presence of BUMDes can contribute to local economic improvement by providing business facilities, creating employment opportunities, and opening access to new economic activities. In this context, BUMDes provide an institutional mechanism for broadening community access to village resources, including both natural and economic resources.

More broadly, BUMDes represent a form of collective village action that brings together local resources, human capital, and village government support to establish a more productive local economic system. Their activities may include savings and loan services, village-owned retail businesses, transportation services, clean water provision, tourism, agricultural processing, and other enterprises developed according to local conditions and community needs. Their overarching objective is to improve community welfare by managing local assets responsibly and sustainably and by generating greater economic value from resources available within the village.

The management of BUMDes also requires active community participation, ranging from business planning and organizational development to day-to-day operations. This participatory approach is important because it helps ensure that BUMDes activities are responsive to community needs and receive legitimacy from local residents (Arnstein, 1969; Scheyvens, 1999). In addition, BUMDes are expected to contribute to village revenue, which can subsequently be used to finance public infrastructure and improve public services. Revenue generated by BUMDes can become part of Village Original Revenue (Pendapatan Asli Desa/PADes), thereby strengthening the village's fiscal capacity to support local development programs. However, evidence shows that the contribution of BUMDes to village revenue is often modest and that many BUMDes perform below expectations (Fitriani et al., 2024; Geru et al., 2025).

The role of BUMDes is also evident in their capacity to stimulate the local economy. By developing businesses based on local resources and comparative advantages, BUMDes can expand employment opportunities, create new business opportunities, and provide community members with opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills. BUMDes may also provide economic services, such as savings and loan facilities, that improve access to capital at relatively affordable costs. Another important role is strengthening village self-reliance by reducing dependence on transfers or external assistance, as villages are able to mobilize and manage their own resources. From a social perspective, BUMDes can promote community empowerment by involving residents as managers, workers, service providers, or business partners.

Given these diverse strategic functions, BUMDes constitute an important component of sustainable village development. Their purpose extends beyond the pursuit of financial profit to include the achievement of social, economic, and community empowerment objectives (Fitriani et al., 2024). When managed effectively, BUMDes can make a substantial contribution to building more self-reliant and economically resilient villages while enabling communities to maximize local resources and improve their overall welfare. Studies in North Sulawesi have examined *mapalus* as a form of community empowerment (Turang et al., 2012) and local culture as a tourism-village asset (Sendow et al., 2023), but the role of BUMDes in connecting tourism

management, financial governance, and collective action remains underexplored.

This study examines the role of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in improving the local economy through the management and development of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism in Lowian Village. The research addresses the following questions: How are the promotion and accessibility of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism currently managed? How does the BUMDes-managed restaurant unit contribute to the development of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism and the local economy of Lowian Village, and how transparent and accountable is the financial management of BUMDes? What role does BUMDes play in mobilizing gotong royong (mapalus) activities in Lowian Village, and how do these collective activities contribute to the local economy and tourism development? This study aims to describe and analyze the role of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in improving community economic welfare through the management and development of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism in Lowian Village. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the economic potential of Lowian Village that has not yet been fully utilized. By identifying and understanding the village's natural resources, cultural assets, and community skills, BUMDes can develop business activities that are more appropriately targeted, sustainable, and capable of generating greater local economic value. The findings may also provide practical insights for village authorities and BUMDes managers in strengthening tourism-based economic development and increasing the contribution of local resources to community welfare.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the role of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in improving the local economy through the management and development of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism in Lowian Village. A qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and activities of individuals directly involved in BUMDes management and tourism development.

Research Location and Participants

The study was conducted in Lowian Village, Maesaan District, South Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, from November to December 2024. Participants were selected purposively based on their knowledge and involvement in BUMDes activities and the management of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism. They included BUMDes administrators, village government representatives, tourism-related business managers, and community members involved in economic activities around the tourism site.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews focused on BUMDes management, tourism development and promotion, restaurant operations, financial management, community participation, and gotong royong/mapalus activities. Observations were conducted to examine tourism facilities, business activities, visitor conditions, and community participation. Relevant BUMDes and village documents were also reviewed to complement the interview and observation data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed thematically through the stages of data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents was compared to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the role of BUMDes, local economic opportunities, community participation, and challenges in managing the tourism destination.

Data Trustworthiness

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and method triangulation by comparing information from different participants and verifying interview findings through observations and relevant documents (Carter et al., 2014). This process was used to ensure that the interpretation remained consistent with the conditions observed in the field.

RESULT

Based on in-depth interviews with the research participants, the findings indicate that Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) play a strategic role in stimulating local economic activities through the management of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism in Lowian Village. As a village-level economic institution, BUMDes is expected to optimize local resources and transform them into activities that generate tangible benefits for the local community. In Lowian Village, Maesaan District, South Minahasa Regency, BUMDes manages several business activities aimed at supporting community welfare. The main findings are presented below.

The Role of BUMDes in Improving the Local Economy through Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism

The findings indicate that BUMDes has the potential to serve as an important instrument for strengthening the local economy by utilizing the natural resources available in the village. Rural development continues to face various challenges compared with more economically developed urban areas, including limitations in infrastructure, economic opportunities, public services, and the capacity to utilize local resources. In this context, BUMDes provides an institutional mechanism through which villages can develop local economic potential and generate additional sources of income.

The establishment and operation of BUMDes are supported by Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which provides villages with greater authority to manage and develop their local assets according to community needs. This legal framework provides a basis for villages to establish business units and strengthen local economic self-reliance. In Lowian Village, this authority is reflected in the utilization of Manamburi Hot Springs as a tourism-based economic asset.

The findings show that Manamburi Hot Springs has economic potential not only as a tourist attraction but also as a platform for developing complementary businesses and community-based economic activities. Through tourism management, BUMDes creates opportunities for food and beverage businesses, employment, local product sales, and other supporting services. However, the findings also reveal several challenges that limit the optimal contribution of BUMDes to the local economy.

One of the main challenges is limited community participation. Some residents remain less involved in BUMDes activities because of limited understanding of the potential benefits of BUMDes, competing livelihood activities such as farming, and insufficient communication between BUMDes managers and the wider community. Limited financial capital is another constraint, particularly in expanding business operations, improving tourism facilities, and developing supporting infrastructure. These constraints resemble the operational, structural, and cultural limits to community participation identified in tourism development in developing countries (Tosun, 2000), and they underline the long-standing emphasis on participatory planning and management in local tourism (Garrod, 2003).

The managerial capacity of BUMDes administrators also requires further strengthening. Managing a village enterprise requires not only commitment but also competencies in business planning, marketing, financial administration, customer service, and evidence-based decision-making. Limited managerial capacity may therefore constrain the ability of BUMDes to fully achieve its economic empowerment objectives (Fitriani et al., 2024; Geru et al., 2025).

These findings suggest that the effectiveness of BUMDes depends not only on the availability of local resources but also on institutional capacity, financial resources, managerial competencies, and community participation. Strengthening these dimensions is important to ensure that tourism development generates sustainable economic benefits for the local community.

Restaurant Management as a Source of Local Economic Activity

One of the supporting business units managed by BUMDes Lowian is a restaurant/canteen located within the Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism area. The unit is operated by three active BUMDes members who are responsible for providing food and beverages to visitors from approximately 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Products include local main dishes, such as miedal and mie loba, snacks and traditional cakes such as pia and kue bepang, as well as various beverages.

The interviews indicate that the restaurant and related food businesses generate meaningful economic activity. One informant reported that combined food and beverage sales in the tourism area could reach approximately IDR 2,000,000 per day, with the proceeds shared between the village and BUMDes. Another source reported average daily sales of approximately IDR 450,000 for the cake-selling unit, with approximately IDR 225,000 allocated to BUMDes after revenue sharing. Meanwhile, the treasurer or UMKM unit manager reported average UMKM sales of approximately IDR 300,000 per day and total tourism-related contributions of approximately IDR 5,000,000 per week.

The differences between these figures indicate variations in the scale and type of business activities as well as fluctuations in visitor numbers. Rather than representing a single consolidated revenue figure, the different accounts reflect the diverse economic activities operating within the tourism area.

The restaurant contributes to the local economy in several ways. First, it generates direct income through food and beverage sales. Second, it creates employment opportunities for local residents. One community member explained: "I did not have a job before. Now I can work in the village business unit."

Third, the restaurant provides a market for local products, particularly traditional cakes and locally processed foods. This creates additional income opportunities for households and contributes to the circulation of money within the village. Revenue shared with the village also contributes to Village Original Revenue (PADes), which can subsequently support other village development activities.

Promotion and Marketing

The restaurant currently relies on relatively simple promotional strategies, including announcements through social media, particularly Facebook, and online delivery services. Although these activities help expand the potential customer base, they have not yet been integrated into a systematic tourism marketing strategy. Social media is widely used as a destination marketing tool (Hays et al., 2013), and digital promotion has been identified as one factor in the success of another BUMDes-managed tourism village (Fatikasari & Mustofa, 2025).

Several opportunities remain available for strengthening promotion, including the development of culinary tourism packages, partnerships with local travel operators, the use of online transportation and delivery platforms, improved product packaging, and advance ordering for visitors. Traditional cakes and local food products could also be developed as souvenirs, allowing visitors to purchase products beyond their immediate consumption at the tourism site.

Financial Management and Revenue Sharing

The findings indicate that revenue-sharing arrangements are applied to several types of tourism-related income between the village and BUMDes. However, differences in the revenue figures reported by informants indicate the need for more standardized financial recording.

The reported figures include approximately IDR 5,000,000 in total weekly tourism-related contributions, approximately IDR 450,000 in daily cake sales, and up to IDR 2,000,000 in daily food and beverage sales. These differences may reflect different business units, reporting periods, and revenue-sharing arrangements. Nevertheless, they also highlight the importance of consistent financial recording and reporting.

More systematic financial administration would facilitate the calculation of operating costs, revenue sharing, reinvestment, and profitability while strengthening accountability and public trust, which are recurring challenges for BUMDes (Fitriani et al., 2024; Geru et al., 2025). Greater transparency in financial management may also encourage broader community participation in BUMDes activities.

Direct and Indirect Economic Benefits

The management of the restaurant and other tourism-related businesses generates both direct and indirect economic benefits, consistent with the distinction between direct effects and secondary benefit flows of tourism (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). Direct benefits include additional income for business operators and local suppliers, as well as employment opportunities for residents working as cooks, servers, and other support staff. The importance of ensuring that at least part of tourism income benefits the community as a whole is also emphasized in the community-based tourism literature (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

Indirectly, the availability of food and beverages can encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more within the village. Increased visitor activity may also benefit other local businesses, including transportation services, accommodation providers, and sellers of local products and souvenirs. Beyond these economic effects, the restaurant contributes to the image of the village as a welcoming tourism destination that offers locally distinctive culinary experiences.

Nevertheless, several operational constraints remain. These include limited staffing, inadequate kitchen facilities and equipment, insufficient capital for business expansion and menu diversification, weak financial record-keeping, unstable or seasonal raw-material prices, and limited training in food hygiene, customer service, and business management. These constraints may affect service quality and the ability of the business unit to expand.

Community Participation through Gotong Royong and Mapalus

Gotong royong, locally associated with the tradition of mapalus, remains an important form of collective action in Lowian Village (cf. Bowen, 1986; Parengkuan, 2006). The findings indicate that collective community activities contribute to the maintenance and development of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism.

Community participation takes several forms. First, residents participate in maintaining the cleanliness of the tourism area and access routes by cutting grass, collecting waste, and maintaining pedestrian pathways. Several participants emphasized that cleanliness is an important factor in creating a positive visitor experience.

Second, community members participate in the maintenance and improvement of tourism facilities, including seating areas, steps leading to the pools, safety barriers, and parking areas. Community participation was also reported in the construction of approximately one kilometer of concrete road leading to the tourism site, particularly through unpaid community labor.

Third, gotong royong extends beyond physical activities to include broader forms of social support associated with village and BUMDes activities. This collective involvement strengthens social ties and contributes to a sense of shared responsibility for the tourism destination. Such collective involvement can be understood as a form of social capital that builds networks, trust, and norms of reciprocity (Putnam et al., 1993), and mapalus has been reported to strengthen togetherness and reduce community workloads (Pongantung & Khasanah, 2024).

Economic Benefits of Gotong Royong

The findings suggest that gotong royong contributes indirectly to the local economy by improving the condition and attractiveness of the tourism destination. Better-maintained facilities and a cleaner environment can improve visitor comfort and potentially encourage greater visitation.

Increased tourism activity creates additional opportunities for BUMDes and local residents through ticket sales, parking, food and beverage sales, traditional cakes, and other tourism-

related activities. Community participation also contributes to a stronger sense of ownership, encouraging residents to maintain and protect tourism facilities.

Thus, the economic contribution of gotong royong should not be understood only in terms of direct monetary compensation. Its contribution also occurs through the reduction of maintenance costs, improvement of tourism infrastructure, strengthening of community ownership, and creation of conditions that support local economic activity.

Challenges in Community Participation

Despite its importance, community participation in gotong royong faces several challenges. Participation, particularly among male residents, has reportedly declined because many residents are occupied with their primary livelihoods, including patchouli farming, which is consistent with reports that changing livelihoods and modernization weaken mapalus practices in other Minahasa villages (Iroth & Laiyan, 2025; Worotikan et al., 2023). In addition, coordination between BUMDes and community members is not yet conducted regularly, and a structured schedule for collective activities has not been established.

Another challenge is that some residents do not yet perceive direct economic benefits from tourism activities. When the perceived benefits of tourism are unevenly distributed, community motivation to participate in collective activities may decline.

These findings indicate that strengthening community participation requires more than simply mobilizing residents for physical activities, since participation in tourism ranges from superficial to genuinely empowering forms (Arnstein, 1969; Tosun, 1999). BUMDes and village authorities need to improve communication, establish regular mechanisms for community involvement, and ensure that the economic benefits generated by tourism are increasingly accessible to local residents.

Research Contribution

This study contributes to the understanding of how BUMDes can function as a community-based institutional mechanism for local economic development through tourism. The findings extend the discussion of BUMDes beyond their role as village business entities by showing how tourism management, local business development, and collective community action can operate together to generate local economic opportunities.

The study also highlights the complementary relationship between economic activities and social participation. While restaurant management and tourism-related businesses generate direct economic benefits, gotong royong/mapalus contributes indirectly by maintaining tourism infrastructure, reducing maintenance burdens, strengthening community ownership, and improving the attractiveness of the destination.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening BUMDes requires an integrated approach that combines business management, financial transparency, tourism marketing, managerial capacity, and meaningful community participation. For Lowian Village, these elements are particularly important for transforming Manamburi Hot Springs from a local natural asset into a more sustainable source of community-based economic development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) play an important role in supporting local economic development in Lowian Village through the management of Manamburi Hot Springs Tourism and its supporting business activities. The findings indicate that the contribution of BUMDes extends beyond the operation of village-owned businesses. BUMDes also functions as an institutional mechanism for mobilizing local resources, creating economic opportunities, and facilitating community participation in tourism development. The management of Manamburi Hot Springs demonstrates the potential of BUMDes to transform a local natural resource into an economic asset. Through the provision and management of tourism facilities, cleanliness, visitor services, and tourism-related revenues, BUMDes contributes to

maintaining the attractiveness and economic value of the destination. The tourism site also creates opportunities for complementary economic activities, particularly food and beverage businesses. The BUMDes-managed restaurant and food-service activities provide direct economic benefits by generating income and employment opportunities for local residents while creating a market for traditional food products. At the same time, the findings reveal several limitations, including limited capital, inadequate facilities, weaknesses in financial recording, limited managerial capacity, and relatively simple promotional strategies. These constraints may limit the ability of BUMDes to expand its economic contribution and develop the tourism destination more sustainably. Community participation through gotong royong and the local tradition of mapalus represents another important dimension of BUMDes' contribution. Collective activities such as cleaning the tourism area, maintaining facilities, supporting infrastructure development, and providing social assistance strengthen community involvement and a sense of shared ownership. The economic value of such participation is not limited to direct financial returns; it also reduces maintenance burdens, improves the tourism environment, and creates conditions that support local economic activities. Overall, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of BUMDes in promoting local economic development depends on the interaction between business management, tourism development, institutional capacity, and community participation. BUMDes therefore should not be viewed solely as a village business entity, but also as an institution that connects local resources with community-based economic development. However, realizing this potential requires stronger managerial capacity, more transparent financial management, improved marketing, adequate investment, and broader and more sustained community participation.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to strengthen the future development of BUMDes in Lowian Village. First, BUMDes should strengthen business diversification while maintaining a clear focus on locally available resources and market opportunities. In addition to tourism-related businesses, potential activities such as agricultural-product processing, village transportation services, and other locally relevant enterprises could be explored. Diversification may create additional sources of village revenue while reducing dependence on a single business activity. Second, digital marketing and tourism promotion should be strengthened. Social media should be used more systematically to promote Manamburi Hot Springs, local culinary products, and tourism packages. Partnerships with local tourism operators and the use of digital ordering and delivery platforms could also expand market reach and increase visitor engagement. Third, financial management and reporting should be improved. Standardized financial records, transparent revenue-sharing mechanisms, and regular reporting would strengthen accountability and public trust while providing BUMDes managers with better information for planning, reinvestment, and business development. Finally, community participation should be institutionalized rather than relying solely on occasional gotong royong activities. Residents should have meaningful opportunities to participate in planning, implementation, and evaluation of BUMDes programs. More inclusive participation could strengthen community ownership and ensure that the economic benefits generated by tourism are more widely distributed among local residents.

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