Sustainable local tourism on digital government-based and community-based in Ciamis, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study discusses the strategy of sustainable local tourism that integrates the digital government and community based tourism (CBT) approaches in Ciamis Regency. The diffusion of local culture and digitalization of the public sector are the main foundations in the formation and management of community-based pioneering tourism objects. Using a qualitative approach, this study reveals patterns of social interaction, the role of local actors, and the dynamics of collaboration between stakeholders in tourism development. The results of the study indicate that the practices of digital government through a tourism information system, integrated digital services, and participatory platforms can strengthen more inclusive, transparent, and adaptive tourism governance. Collaboration between local communities, local governments, academics, and industry players is an important prerequisite in realizing a sustainable smart tourism strategy. the digital integrated community based tourism (DICBT) model is offered as an innovation that can increase the competitiveness of destinations while strengthening the welfare of local communities in the digital era.

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Introduction

The welfare of local communities at the village level, environmental issues, and sustainable tourism are important elements that are interrelated in creating inclusive development. Sustainable tourism, for example, not only aims to promote local economic growth, but also maintains the natural ecosystem and local culture that are the attractions of tourism itself (Prabowo & Sudrajat, 2021; Subawa & Nadya Leonita, 2024). The tourism sector depends on the number of tourist visits, which has implications for the Regional Gross Domestic Product and the sustainability of the local tourism industry (Ahmad, 2022; Sentanu & Mahadiansar, 2020).

The Regional Government certainly has an important role in improving welfare and the Regional Gross Domestic Product from the tourism sector. However, from 2019 to 2024, there was a fluctuation in the number of tourist visits to Ciamis Regency. A sharp decline occurred in 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic, while in the following years, the increase in the number of tourists was slow and insignificant. This condition shows the need for more adaptive strategic efforts in managing the tourism sector, especially by integrating digital technology. The implementation of Digital Government is a potential solution to increase the efficiency of tourism services, expand

the reach of digital promotion, and open up space for community participation in managing tourist destinations.

The integration of digital government and community-based tourism (CBT) has the potential to create an inclusive and participatory tourism ecosystem, in which destination management decisions are data-driven and actively involve multiple actors in the planning and evaluation of tourism policies. Within this framework, digital technology functions not only as an instrument of smart tourism but also as a medium of cultural diffusion, enabling local communities to promote tourism potential grounded in local culture and wisdom through digital platforms. However, to move beyond a merely normative orientation, key concepts such as digital government, smart tourism, cultural diffusion, and CBT must be clearly theorized and operationalized, so that the DICBT model is not merely descriptive but analytically capable of explaining the strategic role of communities as central actors in the digital tourism value chain, supported by public policy, digital capacity building, and sustainable governance.

Strengthening community-based tourism through a digital government approach must be accompanied by transparent, accountable, and power-sensitive governance, so that digitalization does not widen social inequalities but instead functions as an instrument to broaden participation, enhance distributive justice, and ensure social sustainability in tourism development. With an integrated information system and the use of real-time tourist data, local governments can design more responsive and evidence-based policies to encourage sustainable tourism growth. The number of tourist visits is as follows:

Figure 1. Number of Tourist Visits to Ciamis Regency
Source: www.data.ciamiskab.go.id, 2025.

Based on Figure 1, there is a fluctuation in the number of tourist visits, namely, in 2020 it decreased by 30.36% and in 2024 it increased by 6.11%. The data shows that the increase in the number of tourists did not increase significantly. This indicates that recovery of the regional tourism sector is needed to face various challenges. (Wahyuni, 2021). Factors such as government policies, economic conditions, destination attractiveness, community participation, and tourism promotion can influence the level of tourist visits (Ahmadi & Natasya Giyar Dwisyafitri, 2022; Kurniati et al., 2023; Rambe et al., 2024).

Sustainable tourism is one of the steps in efforts to improve the economy in the tourism sector (Palazzo et al., 2022). Improving tourism infrastructure and accessibility,

as well as community participation, are alternatives for the sustainability of the tourism industry (Palacios-Florencio et al., 2021). The cohesion of the role of local communities or societies in tourism governance results in dynamics in the creation of tourism opportunities based on local resources (Sharpley, 2023).

Smart tourism is a framework for improving resources, information accessibility, and management in tourist destinations (Bulchand-Gidumal, 2022; Rahman & Dura, 2022). However, for regional tourism industry actors, this has not been fully utilized and developed in optimizing digital-based services, utilizing big data for analyzing tourist trends, and integrating technology in destination promotion and managementAfifa et al, 2022; Satyaninggrat et al., 2023) . Lack of digital infrastructure, limited technological literacy, and minimal collaboration between stakeholders are the main challenges in implementing smart tourism at the local level (Hadi et al., 2022; Rahman & Dura, 2022).

Local rural communities in Ciamis Regency dominate the initiation of the formation of pioneering tourist attractions. Local communities and innovations in developing tourist destinations begin in the form of pioneering tourist attractions (Ruiz-Ortega et al., 2021; Sabri et al., 2023). Therefore, further studies are needed to identify the role of social capital, community involvement, local innovation, and the influence of technology and government policies in encouraging the formation of community-based tourist destinations (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Prakoso et al., 2020).

Community-based Tourism (CBT) is one of the supporters of sustainable tourism that is in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) number 1 on No Poverty, number 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and number 15 on Terrestrial Ecosystems. Community-based Tourism (CBT) has the potential to improve community welfare and environmental preservation, but there are negative impacts if not managed properly. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is relevant to Asta Cita number 6 regarding building in the village.

Participation of local rural communities in regional tourism development and improving welfare, as well as improving community institutions, are key factors in creating sustainable and community-based tourism (Darmayanti & Oka, 2020; Permatasari, 2022). The role of the government is also inseparable from efforts to support and facilitate tourism development through strategic policies, assistance, and the use of technology within the framework of digital government (Kumar et al., 2022). However, the pattern of cultural diffusion in regional tourism development requires in-depth research.

Research on the integration of digital technology in tourism has developed rapidly worldwide, for example, in the development of smart destination management in Spain, which emphasizes governance, innovation, technology, sustainability, and accessibility (Andrades et al., 2024). Governance emphasizes cross-sector collaboration and data-driven decision-making through transparent and participatory mechanisms (Kim et al., 2022). Innovation focuses on developing an innovation ecosystem through collaboration among government, academia, and industry stakeholders to create new solutions in tourism services (Biz & Grechi, 2021). Technology serves as the backbone of the system through the implementation of integrated digital platforms, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) to enhance management efficiency and the tourist experience (Fernández-Díaz et al., 2023).

Sustainability ensures that every tourism policy considers the balance between environmental, social, and economic sustainability through the preservation of cultural heritage, environmentally friendly resource management, and the empowerment of local communities (García-Avilés, 2020). Meanwhile, accessibility ensures inclusivity by

applying the principle of "tourism for all," guaranteeing ease of access for all groups, including persons with disabilities.

The implementation of e-tourism platforms in South Korea underscores the role of digital technology as a key catalyst in the development of smart tourism, which shares similar principles with the Smart Destination Management model in Spain. Through an integrated platform, the South Korean government utilizes big data, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI) to provide personalized tourism services, enhance destination management efficiency, and strengthen global tourism promotion (Cardoso & Ruiz, 2021; Singh & Bashar, 2023).

In the ASEAN region, the implementation of digital governance for rural tourism in Thailand represents a national strategy that integrates digital technology into village tourism governance to strengthen the local economy and preserve cultural sustainability. Through the Thailand 4.0 policy and the Digital Tourism Thailand initiative, the government has developed an integrated tourism information system that enables community-based destination promotion through online platforms, mobile applications, and digital marketing jointly managed by local governments and communities (Sasirin et al., 2024).

Most studies still focus on the technological aspects and digital promotion rather than on the collaboration between digital governance and local community empowerment. The novelty of this research lies in its approach, which integrates the concepts of Digital Government and Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a strategy for sustainable regional tourism governance. The synergy between these two concepts has rarely been explored in the context of local government in Indonesia. This study addresses key gaps in regional tourism governance, particularly the weak integration between local digital tourism institutions and Digital Government systems, which results in fragmented data management, promotion, and destination performance evaluation, as well as the limited strategic involvement of local communities in Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Low digital literacy among rural tourism actors and insufficient government support for capacity building further constrain community participation in digital transformation.

Focusing on Ciamis Regency, the study examines the dynamics of tourism governance under the integration of Digital Government, CBT, and cultural diffusion, emphasizing how digital technology can support the dissemination of local values, strengthen community participation, and foster transparent, inclusive, and sustainable tourism governance. More specifically, this study explores the following question: how can the integration of digital government and community-based tourism be strategically designed and implemented to achieve sustainable regional tourism management in Ciamis Regency?

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenology. Data were obtained from observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Primary data collection techniques came from community leaders, tourism managers, and local government officials. The data analysis process was carried out by triangulation and thematic coding of the data obtained to find relevant patterns (Fajru & Saptyana, 2025; Meriatami et al., 2025).

The study was conducted in Cihaurbeuti and Sadananya Districts, which were purposively selected as representations of emerging and developing tourism villages. The research involved 18 participants, consisting of tourism village managers and

Pokdarwis members, community leaders, local government officials in tourism and planning agencies, as well as academics and tourism facilitators, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in tourism planning, management, or facilitation.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document analysis, and one focus group discussion, and then analyzed using a staged thematic coding process. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation and member checking, and the findings were used to critically examine the DICBT model and to formulate inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable regional tourism management strategies in Ciamis Regency.

The research findings were then interpreted contextually by linking the results of thematic coding to the dynamics of tourism governance, actor roles, and the implementation of digital technology at the local level. This analysis enabled the study to identify patterns in the interaction between digital government and community-based tourism, assess the extent to which the DICBT model operates in practice, and reveal key constraints and enabling factors in regional tourism management. Accordingly, the findings are not merely descriptive, but are used analytically to formulate policy recommendations and strategies for strengthening more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable tourism governance in Ciamis Regency.

Results and Discussion

Field findings indicate that cultural diffusion in tourism management in Ciamis Regency occurs through direct interaction with tourists 45%, social media utilization 35%, and the adaptation of new values from tourism experiences 20%. Local communities dominate operational aspects of tourism management 70%. However, their involvement in strategic dimensions remains limited, as digital management, online promotion, and the use of tourism data are largely controlled by external actors and the government, with community participation accounting for only about 30% and remaining insufficiently integrated. This is due to limited digital infrastructure, low technological literacy, and suboptimal support from the government in providing an inclusive digital platform for local tourism actors (Afandy et al., 2025; Astuti et al., 2025).

The role of local government becomes crucial, not only in terms of regulation and promotion, but also in building a digital ecosystem that supports strengthening the capacity of local communities. Effective implementation of Digital Government in the tourism sector allows the government to provide public digital services such as online licensing systems, tourist attraction databases, and real-time data-based tourist information dashboards (Herawati & Pranatawijaya, 2025). The government can also facilitate digital literacy training for tourism actors, create integrated tourism promotion applications, and establish partnerships with academics and industry players to develop service innovations (Azizuddin & 'Ainulyaqin, 2022).

In practice, there is still a gap between digital policies and the technical and social readiness of local communities, which hinders the realization of adaptive and sustainable tourism governance. The Digital Integrated Community-Based Tourism (DICBT) model formulated in this study is presented as an answer to this complexity. A conceptual framework was developed based on empirical findings from research in Ciamis Regency to explain interactions among actors, the use of digital technology, and the dynamics of community-based tourism governance. This model is not intended as a purely normative construct, but rather as an analytical representation that illustrates how government, digital platforms, tourism information systems, and local

communities interact in shaping destination management and tourist visits. By positioning community-based tourism at its core, the DICBT model highlights mechanisms of digital integration while also revealing power relations, capacity constraints, and collaboration needs that emerge in tourism governance practices in Ciamis, thereby distinguishing it from smart tourism models applied in other national contexts. The Digital Integrated Community-Based Tourism model is described as follows:
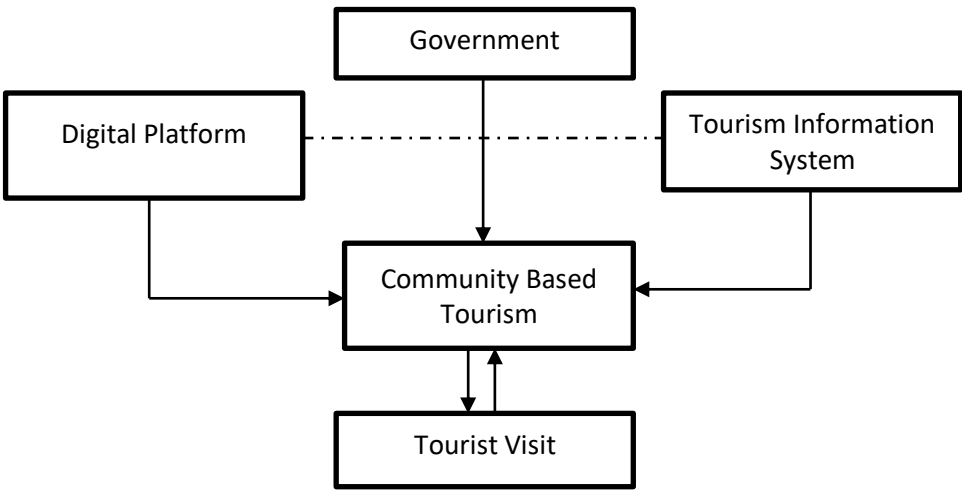
Figure 2. Digital Integrated Community-Based Tourism Model
Source: research results, 2025.

Table 1. Driving Factors of Smart and Sustainable Tourism Governance

Integrated Dimension	Research Findings
Governance and Leadership	Tourism governance is supported by a long-term policy vision, accountability mechanisms, and the role of regional leadership in coordinating government actors, local communities, and external partners.
Innovation and Technology	Institutional innovation and the use of digital technologies contribute to destination management, online promotion, and tourism information services, although community digital capacity remains uneven.
Social, Economic, and Environmental Sustainability	Tourism management is oriented toward cultural preservation, community economic development, and environmental protection through a community-based tourism approach.
Cultural Identity and Community Participation	Local cultural values and traditions form the foundation of destination development, with strong community involvement at the operational level, but limited participation

Source: research results, 2025.

DICBT integrates cultural diffusion, community empowerment, and digital technology through Digital Government as a Quadruple Helix facilitator, aiming to strengthen competitive, community-based smart tourism in Ciamis Regency. Interview findings indicate that community-based tourism management within the DICBT framework in Ciamis Regency is reflected in community involvement from the planning stage, particularly in determining tourism attractions and managing facilities. Field observations and regional planning documents demonstrate the active role of

community-based tourism groups in daily operational management; however, interviews with local government officials reveal that the strategic aspect, especially digital platform management and tourism data analysis, remains largely dependent on government authorities and external partners. These findings underscore that although local communities dominate operational levels, their repositioning as strategic actors in digital tourism governance, as envisioned in the DICBT model, still requires capacity strengthening, policy support, and more structured collaborative mechanisms. The research findings indicate several factors that drive smart and sustainable tourism, as follows Table 1.

The results of the study indicate that tourism governance in Ciamis Regency is starting to move towards smart governance practices that emphasize the importance of strategic vision and targeted policy implementation, starting from the establishment of the Ciamis Regency Regional Tourism Development Master Plan for 2017-2027 and contained in Ciamis Regency Regional Regulation Number 16 of 2016. There is also the Ciamis Regency Regional Tourism Promotion Agency as an institution that aims to expand tourism promotion. There are several research results that are synergistic with tourism governance in Ciamis Regency.

Regional Tourism Governance

Tourism governance in Ciamis Regency remains largely dependent on management capacity and inter-agency coordination, while transparency and public participation are gradually emerging through community and local business involvement in tourism planning, contributing to improved accountability and sustainable tourism governance. (Seputro & Mustafida, 2023). Institutional control and accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened to ensure governance is more accountable and integrated with the regional digital government system.

Regional Tourism Innovation

Innovation describes the dynamic adaptation of tourism actors to tourist needs and global challenges (Beryl et al., 2024). The research shows that several destinations in Ciamis have introduced community-based innovations in homestay management and digital promotion, as well as thematic tourism products and creative entrepreneurship initiatives, although the innovation ecosystem remains underdeveloped due to limited cross-sector collaboration.

Technology

The use of technology is a crucial aspect in promoting smart tourism. In Ciamis Regency, technology has begun to be implemented in promotions through social media and digital tourism maps, but the implementation of integrated tourism information systems remains limited. Digital infrastructure, such as internet access in rural tourist areas, remains uneven, hampering connectivity between destinations. The development of technology for smart tourism management, such as e-tourism platforms and data analytics, is needed to ensure a more data-driven decision-making process (Hanum, 2020).

Regional Tourism Sustainability

Sustainability is a key focus of tourism development in Ciamis Regency, reflected in commitments to cultural heritage preservation and ecotourism, although the integration of circular economy principles, sustainability evaluation systems, and consistent green policies remains limited (Kusumawidjaya et al., 2022).

Local Cultural Identity

Local cultural identity serves as a distinctive strength in the development of tourism in Ciamis Regency. The protection of values and traditions, such as regional arts and traditional rituals, is carried out by local communities with government support. Collaboration among cultural practitioners, tourism communities, and destination managers plays an essential role in strengthening the narrative of local identity. The main challenge lies in how these cultural values can be presented in engaging digital formats without losing their authenticity and meaning (Praditha & Wibisana, 2024).

Leadership

Leadership is a strategic factor in determining the direction of regional tourism development. The research findings show that the role of local leaders, both at the government and community levels, greatly influences the success of stakeholder coordination. Leaders with a long-term vision and the ability to make data-driven decisions are better equipped to navigate the complexities of modern tourism. However, further capacity building is needed to foster broader implementation of digital and collaborative leadership (Dewi et al., 2025).

Resilience

Resilience has emerged as a prominent dimension in the post-pandemic era, emphasizing the importance of destinations' ability to adapt to crises and market changes. In Ciamis Regency, several initiatives have been undertaken, such as diversifying tourism products and strengthening the local creative economy. However, risk mitigation systems and climate change adaptation strategies still need further development. The social resilience of tourism communities also needs to be reinforced through continuous training and empowerment so that tourism not only recovers but also grows stronger and more resilient (Wulandari et al., 2020).

The strengthening of smart and sustainable tourism in Ciamis Regency is determined by the integration of digital government as a governance framework, smart tourism as a strategic approach to destination development, and e-tourism platforms as supporting technical instruments. The findings indicate that visionary leadership, technology-based innovation, and socio-cultural sustainability are the dominant factors, while local communities remain strong in operational roles but limited in strategic ones. Thus, the success of smart tourism in Ciamis depends not merely on technology but on digital governance capacity to coordinate actors, strengthen community participation, and ensure destination sustainability.

The transformation toward smart tourism in Ciamis Regency is primarily driven by the dominance of leadership, governance, and cultural identity as the strategic foundation for policy direction, accountability, and social legitimacy, while digital technology functions as a key enabler of community-based tourism governance. Visionary leadership and participatory governance support data-driven decision-making, efficiency, and equitable benefit distribution, and the integration of local cultural identity strengthens destination differentiation and authenticity. However, a limited understanding of Digital Government among tourism actors and some local officials remains a major constraint, resulting in slow adoption of digital infrastructure, promotion systems, and data utilization, which hampers the development of smart, collaborative, and sustainable tourism governance as envisioned in the DICBT model.

The implementation of evidence-based policies in sustainable regional tourism management requires local governments to formulate strategies based on empirical data and verifiable field findings. In the context of Ciamis Regency, the fluctuation in the number of tourist visits and the less-than-optimal use of digital technology show that tourism development policies cannot rely only on normative assumptions or top-down program approaches. The government needs to develop a digital tourism information system that is able to collect tourist visit data, feedback from tourism business actors, and map the potential and obstacles of each destination. This data is an important basis for determining the direction of promotional policies, infrastructure development, human resource training, and integration of digital services that are right on target and sustainable.

Furthermore, evidence-based policies also facilitate evaluation processes and decision-making that are more adaptive to local dynamics. Through this approach, government interventions can be directed at critical points, such as increasing digital literacy in tourism communities, strengthening the role of tourism villages, and developing applications and service platforms based on community needs. Empirical evidence from participatory research processes and policy impact evaluations allows the formulation of a digital tourism governance model that is not only technically responsive but also sensitive to local values. Thus, evidence-based policy becomes the main foundation in synergizing Digital Government, Community-Based Tourism (CBT), and the principles of inclusive and contextual sustainable tourism development.

Another obstacle is the low digital literacy among local communities, especially in rural areas that are strategic locations for community-based tourism development. Many tourism actors are not yet able to access or manage digital platforms for promotions, online reservations, or visitor data management. In fact, within the Digital Government framework, digital collaboration between the government and the community is the key to success in creating an inclusive and responsive system. This gap is exacerbated by limited information technology infrastructure in the regions, such as uneven internet networks, a lack of technical training, and the absence of an integrated system that is easily accessible to users from various educational backgrounds.

Therefore, the strategy to strengthen the implementation of Digital Government must begin with a digital literacy program and comprehensive technical assistance to tourism actors and village government officials. Local governments also need to design affirmative policies in the form of digitalization incentives, development of user-friendly local tourism applications, and encourage the involvement of universities and technology industry players in building human resource capacity in this sector. Thus, the barriers to understanding the importance of Digital Government are not only overcome through a structural approach, but also through a cultural approach that changes people's perspectives and habits towards technology as a tool for empowerment in the tourism sector.

Overcoming these barriers requires local governments to institutionalize multi-stakeholder collaboration through formal coordination mechanisms that integrate tourism offices, village administrations, community-based tourism groups, universities, and technology providers. This collaboration should be implemented through clear role sharing, shared performance indicators, and a sustainable knowledge exchange platform to ensure that digital government initiatives are not fragmented or project-based. Improved governance in this way will help align digital platforms, tourism

information systems, and community practices, while reducing power imbalances and dependence on a small number of actors with digital skills.

In addition, the sustainability of digital government implementation in the tourism sector requires a gradual and context-sensitive adoption strategy. Digital solutions should be designed based on local needs, infrastructure readiness, and community capacity, rather than replicating models from other regions or countries. Pilot programs, iterative evaluation, and feedback loops from tourism actors and visitors are essential to refine digital tools and build trust in their usefulness. By embedding adaptive learning and local ownership into the digital transformation process, digital government can function not merely as a technological intervention but as an enabling governance instrument that supports inclusive, resilient, and community-driven tourism development.

Conclusion

Sustainable local tourism governance in Ciamis Regency requires the integration of digital government and community-based tourism, with local government acting as a facilitator of adaptive digital platforms and policies, and local communities as key actors in destination sustainability based on local wisdom. This synergy enhances information integration, transparency, accountability, and service access, while strengthening the social and economic resilience of communities through active participation in tourism development. Future strategies should therefore focus on improving local digital capacity, strengthening data-based regulations, and expanding supportive digital infrastructure to position Ciamis as a model of resilient and sustainable regional tourism governance in the digital era.

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