

Determinants of Local Community Support for Sustainable Tourism Development at Lido, Sukabumi

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ABSTRACT

This study examines determinants of local residents' perceptions of the Lido destination in Sukabumi, Indonesia, designated as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), and their implications for sustainable tourism. Using a qualitative–interpretive single case study, data were gathered from approximately 11 participants representing local residents and relevant stakeholders through semi-structured interviews, complemented by limited observation and document review. The data were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis supported by NVivo. Findings indicate that residents' support is conditional, hinging primarily on tangible local economic benefits, particularly employment opportunities and MSME supplier access, and credible environmental safeguards for waterways and living spaces. Five interlinked themes emerged—community support, sustainable tourism, destination image, pentahelix governance, and “hopes & suggestions.” Core determinants include perceived benefits and costs, distributive and procedural justice, trust in governance, place attachment, and destination image; while the pentahelix model is acknowledged, it is not yet fully functional. The study contributes a policy-lever framework for converting conditional support into stable social legitimacy through local hiring and procurement targets, indicator-based environmental monitoring, substantive participation and grievance-redress mechanisms, and regular transparent reporting. It underscores the need to integrate inclusive economic gains, procedural justice, and environmental accountability in managing the Lido SEZ.

INTRODUCTION

The Lido Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Sukabumi, West Java, was formally inaugurated by President Joko Widodo in March 2023, and it has since been positioned by the

government as one of the country's flagship integrated tourism developments. The site is already supported by adequate infrastructure, including direct toll-road access from Jakarta, and its location between Mount Gede, Mount Pangrango, and Mount Salak gives it strong natural appeal as a mountain- and lake-based ecotourism destination. It is worth noting, however, that infrastructure and government backing alone rarely determines whether a destination develops sustainably. Rather, such an outcome depends on the continuing support of government, private investors, and, most importantly, the community that lives around the site (Han et al., 2023). Without that community support, even a well-connected and well-funded destination risks becoming an enclave that grows around its host population instead of alongside it, and this tension underlies the present study.

Recent studies further reinforce the importance of placing local communities at the center of sustainable tourism development. (Phuong et al., 2025) in a study involving residents of community-based tourism destinations in Northern Vietnam, found that perceived economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits significantly improve residents' quality of life, which subsequently strengthens their attitudes and participation in sustainable tourism development. Their findings demonstrate that residents do not evaluate tourism solely in terms of destination growth but also according to whether its benefits translate into tangible improvements in their everyday lives. Similarly, (Abou-Shouk et al., 2025) based on 1,430 respondents from three countries, demonstrated that perceptions of sustainability performance are closely associated with local community support for sustainable tourism development, while community attitudes toward tourism play an important role in shaping that relationship. These recent findings strengthen the argument that sustainable tourism requires not merely economic expansion but also credible mechanisms through which communities can experience, evaluate, and participate in its benefits.

This concern is particularly relevant to Lido. Since the SEZ was designated, residents around Lido have shown a comparatively muted response to the pace of tourism development, even as destination management has sought to foreground job creation, environmental protection, and cultural enrichment as the project's positive dividends. Furthermore, preliminary fieldwork in Cigombong sub-district, including conversations with the sub-district head (Camat) and community leaders in the neighborhood bordering Lido Lake, indicated that parts of destination management have not yet built an open working relationship with surrounding residents, and that much of the current workforce is not drawn from the immediately adjacent villages. Accordingly, these conditions make it more urgent, rather than less, to understand how residents actually perceive the destination and what would move their stance from cautious ambivalence toward genuine support. In this regard, two research questions guide this study: (1) how do residents perceive the tourism image of Lido, and (2) what would enable them to more fully support its development as a sustainable destination?

Against this background, the urgency of the study lies in the pressing need to understand, and ultimately strengthens, residents' response, perception, and support toward sustainable tourism development in Lido, Sukabumi. Through a grounded reading of residents' perceptions and attitudes, together with the factors that shape their support, this research is expected to provide stakeholders with a firmer basis for designing sustainable tourism policy and practice at Lido. It is also important to note that the study speaks directly to SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and aligns with the sixth pillar of the Prabowo–Gibran

administration's Asta Cita agenda, which calls for development to begin at the village level as a path toward more equitable economic growth.

An initial review of the literature, drawing on the Scopus and Google Scholar databases, situates this study within a decade-long body of work on residents' perceptions of tourism. Much of this work has examined residents' perceptions of urban and heritage tourist destinations (Stylidis, 2016, 2018), the development of pro-tourism models and behavior (Fernandes Neves Barbosa et al., 2024; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Woosnam et al., 2022), residents' perceptions of food markets (Crespi Vallbona & Dimitrovski, 2017; Dimitrovski et al., 2022), overtourism, and sports events (Boonsiritomachai & Phonthanukitithaworn, 2019; Johnston et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2023). Across this body of work, whether quantitative or qualitative in design, a recurring finding is that a perceived benefit–cost calculus, place image, and place attachment jointly shape whether residents come to support or resist tourism development (Han et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Uslu et al., 2023). Recent studies published in 2025 further demonstrate that economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits, quality of life, participation, sustainability performance, and governance remain central to residents' support for tourism development (Abou-Shouk et al., 2025; Phuong et al., 2025; Qu, 2025). However, what remains largely unexamined is how these mechanisms unfold within a newly designated Special Economic Zone built around a nature-based tourism asset, where a state economic mandate, private investment interests, and a resident community's sense of place converge in a single, still-unsettled governance arrangement (Azizurrohman et al., 2023; Zitri et al., 2024).

This study addresses that gap through an in-depth, qualitative-interpretive single case study of Lido, using Reflexive Thematic Analysis supported by NVivo to reconstruct, from residents' own accounts, the determinants that condition their support. It is also important to note that this study marks the first stage of a longer research trajectory. Later phases are intended to examine the perceptions of Lido's other pentahelix actors, namely government, private management, media, and academia, before moving toward the design and testing of a multi-stakeholder partnership model for the SEZ's sustainable tourism governance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-interpretive case study of the Lido tourism destination as a Special Economic Zone, with the aim of examining the determinants of local community perceptions toward support for sustainable tourism. The case study design was chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of the support–opposition phenomenon and the dynamics of pentahelix governance within a real, bounded-system context (Yin, 2018).

The research locus is the Lido area in Sukabumi and its surrounding neighborhoods. Participants include residents who live or work around the site, community leaders, local government officials, MSME actors, and representatives of the destination's management and other stakeholders, among them the sub-district head (Camat) of Cigombong and the neighborhood (RW) leadership bordering Lido Lake. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, based on the relevance of their experience and knowledge to the issue under study, and the sample was subsequently expanded through snowball sampling. The sample was subsequently expanded through snowball sampling until the dataset was considered sufficiently rich and diverse to address the research questions and capture relevant perspectives across participant groups. (Palinkas et al., 2015). Data were collected

through semi-structured interviews with key informants, limited non-participant observation of destination activities and resident–visitor interactions, and a review of supporting documents, including local policies, press releases, and local media coverage. Furthermore, the interview guide was developed from established theories of community perception, namely Social Exchange Theory, distributive and procedural justice, and place attachment, together with the triple-bottom-line principle of sustainable tourism, and it was piloted beforehand to ensure that the questions were open-ended and elicited residents' own narrative accounts.

Data analysis followed Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), a six-phase approach comprising familiarization with the data, the generation of initial codes, the search for candidate themes, the review of themes against the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole, the defining and naming of themes, and the production of the final analytic account. Initial coding and theme development were conducted by the first author, while the developing codes, interpretations, and thematic structure were discussed reflexively among the research team. The analysis adopted a hybrid approach that was predominantly inductive while remaining theoretically informed. Initial codes were generated primarily from participants' accounts and meanings relevant to the research questions rather than being assigned to predetermined theoretical categories. Social Exchange Theory, distributive and procedural justice, place attachment, destination image, and sustainable tourism were subsequently used as sensitizing concepts to deepen the interpretation of the coded data and to examine relationships among emerging patterns. Thus, theoretical concepts informed the interpretation of the data without functioning as a fixed coding framework.

First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the dataset by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts, field notes, and documentary materials and recording preliminary analytic observations. Second, meaningful segments of data relevant to the research questions were coded systematically. Codes were revised, combined, separated, or renamed as understanding of the dataset developed.

Third, related codes were clustered into candidate themes by examining patterns of shared meaning across participants rather than merely grouping similar words or interview topics. Candidate themes were developed around central organizing concepts that explained how residents evaluated tourism development and the conditions underlying their support or concern. For example, codes relating to employment, MSME opportunities, perceived benefits, compensation, participation, and acceptance of development were initially examined together but subsequently differentiated according to the type of meaning they represented.

Fourth, candidate themes were reviewed recursively against both the coded extracts and the complete dataset. Themes that were conceptually overlapping were compared, while themes that contained internally diverse meanings were reorganized or divided. During this process, the researchers considered whether each candidate theme demonstrated sufficient internal coherence while remaining analytically distinct from other themes. Candidate themes were therefore revised according to their central organizing concepts rather than according to the quantity of coded material attached to them.

Fifth, the themes were defined and named by specifying the principal analytical question addressed by each theme and establishing conceptual boundaries among them. This process resulted in five final themes. Community Support captured residents' willingness,

conditions, and evaluations underlying acceptance of tourism development. Sustainable Tourism captured concerns regarding the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of development. Tourism Image Perception represented how residents understood, evaluated, and emotionally interpreted Lido as a tourism destination. Pentahelix Governance captured perceptions of institutional roles, collaboration, transparency, authority, participation, and accountability among relevant stakeholders. Finally, Hopes and Suggestions represented participants' forward-looking expectations and proposed improvements rather than their evaluations of existing conditions. Although analytically distinguished, the themes were understood as interconnected dimensions of residents' experiences rather than mutually exclusive variables.

The final phase involved constructing an interpretive account linking participant narratives, coded meanings, themes, and relevant theoretical concepts. Consistent with Reflexive Thematic Analysis, themes were treated as analytical constructions generated through the researchers' sustained engagement with the dataset rather than as categories objectively existing within the data. Theme development was therefore guided by conceptual and interpretive significance in relation to the research questions, rather than by coding frequency alone.

Coding and theme development were carried out with the assistance of NVivo, which supported the systematic organization of interview transcripts, field notes, and document excerpts, and enabled the visual mapping presented in the Results section, namely the hierarchy charts, tree maps, and word clouds. Consistent with the reflexive orientation of the method, theme development was treated as an interpretive process actively shaped by the researchers' engagement with the data, rather than as a search for pre-existing categories.

Trustworthiness was addressed following Lincoln & Guba (1985) criteria. Credibility was supported through data triangulation across interviews, observation, and documents; dependability and confirmability were supported by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions within NVivo; and transferability was supported by providing sufficiently rich contextual description of the Lido setting for readers to judge the applicability of the findings to comparable Special Economic Zone tourism destinations. In keeping with the reflexive nature of the analysis, the research team acknowledges its position as an external academic party without financial or managerial ties to the destination's development, a stance that shaped both the interview approach and the interpretation of the findings. It is also worth noting that all informants participated voluntarily after being informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw, and that their identities are protected using role-based descriptions rather than full names in the reporting of findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts and field notes, assisted by NVivo, produced five interrelated theme clusters that frame local residents' perceptions of the Lido destination as a Special Economic Zone: Community Support (26.37%), Sustainable Tourism (22.42%), Tourism Image Perception (17.01%), Pentahelix Governance (13.07%), and Hopes and Suggestions (3.64%). The reported percentages represent NVivo coding coverage and are presented only as descriptive indicators of the proportion of coded material associated with each theme, rather than as measures of thematic importance. The five final themes accounted for 82.51% of the coded material, while the remaining 17.49% consisted of excerpts that did

not sufficiently align with the central organizing concepts of the final themes or the analytical focus of the research questions. These excerpts were therefore retained as uncategorized material rather than being forced into existing themes.

Across these visual outputs, a recurring lexical cluster emerged, comprising terms that reference community, management, development, environment, government, involvement, land release and compensation, authority, deliberation, visitors, and local products, together with location-specific references such as the neighboring village of Leuwiliang. Taken together, these terms point to four material concerns running through residents' accounts, namely direct economic benefit, governance and participation, environmental management, and clarity of authority and communication.

First, the Community Support theme indicates that the collective attitude toward the destination functions as the axis around which most resident narratives revolve. This is consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Ap, 1992; Han et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015), which holds that support emerges when residents perceive the exchange between costs and benefits as favorable.

References to income and business opportunities, products, visitors, and growth reflect an expectation of local economic linkages, such as local employment, priority sourcing from local suppliers, and entrepreneurial opportunity. "We basically support the development of Lido, but we hope that people from the surrounding community will also have opportunities to work there" (Local Resident, Participant 04). This account indicates that community support is conditional on whether tourism development generates tangible and locally accessible economic benefits, particularly employment opportunities for residents living around the destination. "If tourism businesses need products or services, local products and businesses should also be involved" (MSME Actor, Participant 05). This quotation further shows that residents expect tourism development to create linkages with the local economy through local procurement and the inclusion of MSMEs in the destination value chain. At the same time, the recurring appearance of terms such as land release and compensation, authority, and deliberation signal a parallel undercurrent of social transaction costs, namely procedural uncertainty and concerns about fairness. "The community wants to be involved in discussions, especially when decisions concern land or matters that directly affect residents" (Community Leader, Participant 02). This statement indicates that residents' support is also shaped by procedural justice, particularly whether they are meaningfully consulted and given a voice in decisions that directly affect their interests.

Read through the lens of perceived justice (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), this suggests that residents' support remains fragile wherever benefits are seen to accrue to a limited group and the decision-making process is not perceived as inclusive.

Second, the Sustainable Tourism theme shows that residents do not view the Lido SEZ merely as an investment project, but as a socio-ecological system in which economic development must be balanced with social and environmental protection. "The important thing is that development should not damage the environment and the condition of the lake, because the community also depends on this area" (Local Resident, Participant 05). This quotation demonstrates that environmental sustainability is understood in practical rather than abstract terms, as the lake and its surrounding environment remain closely connected to residents' everyday activities and livelihoods. "We want this area to develop, but cleanliness

and environmental sustainability must still be maintained” (Local Resident, Participant 07). This account reflects a conditional acceptance of tourism growth; whereby economic development is considered desirable only when accompanied by visible environmental protection.

This aligns with the UNWTO's definition of sustainable tourism, which requires a balance between use and preservation. In the Lido context, ecological concerns such as water quality, habitat, and the carrying capacity of the site occupy a prominent place in residents' discourse. Accordingly, visible mitigation-and-adaptation programs and transparent environmental reporting appear to have a direct bearing on residents' willingness to support the destination.

Third, the Tourism Image Perception theme (17.01%) indicates that the way Lido is represented, and the way residents themselves define it, shapes their attitude toward the destination. Following the destination image model of (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999), the cognitive dimension (facilities, access, and local economic benefit) is closely intertwined with the affective dimension (pride and a sense of ownership). “Lido actually has great potential as a tourism destination, especially because the scenery is attractive and access is now easier” (Local Resident, Participant 010). This account demonstrates that residents' cognitive image of Lido is shaped by their evaluation of concrete destination attributes, particularly natural attractiveness and improved accessibility. Such perceptions provide the functional basis for a favorable destination image, although their broader support for tourism development also depends on whether these perceived advantages are accompanied by local benefits and a sense of ownership.

Lexical patterns such as presence or existence, development, and experience point to a need for a destination narrative that positions residents as a host community rather than mere onlookers. “We also want the community to feel that Lido is part of our area, not only something that belongs to the management or to tourists” (Local Resident, Participant 011). This quotation reveals an affective and place-based dimension of destination image, emphasizing residents' sense of ownership and their desire to remain socially connected to the transformed destination. This is also connected to place attachment (Aleshinloye et al., 2024; Kyle et al., 2004; Pai et al., 2024), whereby the meaning residents attach to place moderates their acceptance of spatial change. It is worth noting that, unless the development narrative explicitly safeguards local memory and residents' access to meaningful spaces such as traditional fishing grounds, a positive destination image is difficult to sustain.

Fourth, the Pentahelix Governance theme (13.07%), together with the frequent appearance of terms referring to government, ministries, authority, and deliberation, indicates that collaborative governance is not yet experienced as fully functional (Widhiasthini et al., 2025; Zitri et al., 2024). “Communication with the community needs to be more open so that we understand the development plans and know who is responsible” (Community Leader, Participant 02). This statement points to transparency and role clarity as important foundations of governance trust, particularly where residents need clear information about development plans and institutional responsibilities. “The government, destination management, and the community should sit together; they should not work separately from one another” (Local Stakeholder, Participant 03). The quotation highlights residents' expectations of substantive collaboration among pentahelix actors rather than fragmented or merely formal stakeholder involvement. Consistent with this, preliminary fieldwork in

Cigombong sub-district found that parts of destination management had not yet established open engagement with all segments of the surrounding community, and that a considerable share of the current workforce originates from outside the immediately adjacent villages, conditions that residents appear to register directly in the way they talk about governance. Trust in governance therefore emerges as a key determinant of support, which includes clarity about who is responsible for what (role clarity), participation channels that are substantive rather than merely informational, a responsive grievance-redress mechanism, and consistent follow-through on environmental and social commitments. In other words, governance credibility is a precondition for translating promised benefits and destination image into actual community support.

Fifth, the theme of Hopes and Suggestions captures participants' forward-looking expectations regarding how tourism development could more effectively involve and benefit the surrounding community. Residents called for stronger education and training, certification or quality standards, cleanliness, and concrete partnership mechanisms. "If the community receives training and mentoring, we will be better prepared to participate in tourism activities" (MSME Actor, Participant 07). This forward-looking statement identifies capacity building as a practical mechanism through which residents and local businesses can become more capable of participating in tourism development. "We hope there will be a clear form of cooperation with the community, not only when particular events are held" (Community Leader, Participant 02). This account indicates that residents seek institutionalized and continuous partnership mechanisms rather than temporary or event-based involvement. Taken together, these accounts indicate that residents' expectations extend beyond short-term participation toward more institutionalized forms of capacity building and continuous partnership.

Integrating these findings, the determinants of local residents' perception of the Lido SEZ can be mapped along five dimensions: (1) perceived local economic benefit (employment, local procurement, and MSME opportunity), (2) perceived social-environmental cost (disruption of living space and ecological risk), (3) distributive and procedural justice (who benefits or bears the cost, and how decisions are made), (4) trust in pentahelix governance (transparency, accountability, and responsiveness), and (5) destination image aligned with place identity.

Theoretically, dimensions (1) and (5) tend to strengthen support, dimension (2) tends to weaken it, while dimensions (3) and (4) function as moderators capable of shifting the overall social-exchange calculus from negative to positive. For a Special Economic Zone specifically, this suggests that policy designs linking the destination's value chain to the local economy, such as supplier contracts, vendor development, and skills upgrading, together with the formalization of participation through community committees, community liaison roles, and social audits, are central to internalizing sustainability within residents' own perception of the destination.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how local residents perceive the tourism development of Lido and the conditions that may strengthen their support for its development as a sustainable destination. The findings show that community support remains conditional and is primarily shaped by perceived local economic benefits, social and environmental costs, procedural and

distributive justice, trust in governance, destination image, and place attachment. Sustainable support therefore depends not only on the benefits generated by tourism development, but also on whether those benefits are fairly distributed, environmental concerns are credibly addressed, and local communities are meaningfully involved in decision-making.

The study contributes to the residents' perception literature by extending existing perspectives on Social Exchange Theory, perceived justice, destination image, and place attachment to the relatively underexplored context of a tourism Special Economic Zone. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening local economic inclusion, environmental accountability, meaningful community participation, and collaborative pentahelix governance to build more durable social legitimacy for tourism development in Lido.

As a qualitative single-case study, the findings provide analytical rather than statistical generalizability, and access to some destination-management stakeholders was limited. Future research should therefore quantitatively validate the determinants identified in this study and broaden the analysis to other pentahelix actors, including government, destination management, academia, and media. Such research could support the development and testing of a multi-stakeholder partnership model for the long-term sustainable governance of the Lido SEZ.

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