

## Tourism Communication Policy in Sustainable Tourism and Climate Change in Garut Regency

<http://dx.doi.org/10.25008/jkiski.v9i1.1048>

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Submitted: March 27, 2024, Revised: May 14, 2024, Accepted: May 30, 2024

Accredited by Kemdikbudristek No. 152/E/KPT/2023

**Abstract** - The tourism sector as one of the drivers of the Indonesian economy is also affected by natural and non-natural disasters. Climate change and disasters encourage the government of Garut Regency in West Java, Indonesia, to carry out various tourism communication policies as part of the effort to increase sustainable tourism activities in the face of climate change and disasters. This research aims to find a model of sustainable tourism communication policy in the face of climate change in Garut Regency. This research uses symbolic interactionism theory, growth pole theory and Community Based Tourism (CBT). The exchange of symbols between tourism actors will build a common meaning in making sustainable tourism communication policies. The type of research used a case study with a research location in Garut Regency, a tourist site as well as a disaster-prone area. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews and documentation. Data validity used data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theory triangulation. The results showed that the policy used in the development of sustainable tourism in Garut Regency emphasizes collaboration and communication of all stakeholders. The involvement of all stakeholders will encourage the realization of community welfare. The focus of sustainable tourism development is the community. Community welfare will be achieved if the community is fully involved in all tourism activities.

**Keywords:** CBT, climate change, growth pole, sustainable tourism, symbolic interactionism.

### Introduction

The tourism sector contributes to Indonesia's foreign exchange earnings (Ramadhaniah, 2020). Despite being known for its beauty, Indonesia is also prone to natural disasters. From January to September 2023, there were 2,724 natural disasters, with flooding being the most common disaster (Reinarto, 2021). Garut Regency, a popular tourist destination, also frequently experiences landslides and floods. Garut Regency, which is located in the southern mountainous zone of West Java, is generally a hilly area. The regency is divided into two watersheds: the Cimanuk watershed in the north and the Cikaengan and Cilaki River watersheds in the south. It has a total of 33 rivers with 101 tributaries, giving it an overall length of 1,397.34 km. Garut Regency's climate and weather are affected by seasonal wind circulation patterns known as monsoonal circulation patterns (garutkab.go.id, 2023).

Sustainable tourism aims to maximize the positive impacts of tourism on the environment, society, and the economy while reducing negative impacts (Commission, 2021). Community empowerment is a key aspect of sustainable tourism, and therefore, the community should be fully involved in various tourism activities (Sunuantari, 2017). Climate change affects cultural tourism in heritage areas by accelerating the weathering process of buildings due to increased air humidity

(Reinarto, 2021). Additionally, it causes intensified flooding and extreme rainfall (Gallen, 2020). To achieve sustainable tourism with long-term benefits for all parties involved, including local communities, stakeholders, tourists, and the country, it is essential to utilize the knowledge and wisdom of the local communities in creating and implementing tourism in the area (Andari et al., 2020). This is particularly crucial in the face of persistent external threats such as natural hazards that visibly impact local places and communities. Effective communication activities are necessary to encourage community participation in the sustainable tourism sector, which is under threat of climate change.

Tourism is a multi-sectoral industry, requiring contributions from all components, particularly the communities in which they operate (Camilleri, 2018). Research on tourism often focuses on two issues: the role of tourism in bridging regional gaps and its potential to support growth and encourage regional economic development (Calero & Turner, 2020; Sunuantari & Farhan, 2022). Human factors are crucial in mitigating the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. Sustainable development often prioritizes the needs of stakeholders, neglecting the involvement of local communities in decision-making. Therefore, effective communication is necessary to establish common ground between communities, stakeholders, and the government (GTZ, 2006). An effective communication strategy is needed in the process of developing sustainable tourism, through the exchange of information from the community to the government and vice versa.

Community participation is needed in the design of disaster-prone tourism destinations. Community participation is a form of community involvement, participation and equality in policy formulation, program implementation and evaluation. The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) is implemented in sustainable tourism development, which prioritizes the involvement of local communities with the aim of preserving the environment. CBT is defined as activities that target poor community members and are related to community empowerment, sustainability, social justice and resilience (Giampiccoli, 2015) (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Climate change is also causing an increase in extreme rainfall and intensified flooding (Gallen, 2020). Sustainable tourism with long-term benefits for all parties (local communities, stakeholders, tourists, and the country) can only be achieved if the knowledge and wisdom of local communities is used to create and implement tourism in these places (Andari et al., 2020). The exchange of information between different parties is a must when dealing with climate change in the tourism sector. The occurrence of mutual communication will encourage changes in community behavior to continue adapting to climate change. Communication is an important component in the implementation of various policies in the tourism sector.

### **Theoretical Framework**

An effective communication strategy is needed in the process of developing sustainable tourism through the exchange of information from the community to the government and vice versa. Communication is the process of exchanging symbols between interacting parties. The interaction process is carried out through both verbal and non-verbal messages. Symbolic interactionism refers to the exchange of symbols both verbal and non-verbal as a form of response between the sender and receiver of the message (Griffin et al., 2022). While the growth pole can be an alternative in supporting communication in building the common meaning of tourism actors. Sustainable tourism management is carried out by identifying a regional growth center that has strong potential so that it will encourage other places to develop (Rusdarti & Fafurida, 2016). Growth pole theory can be developed according to the needs and conditions of each region and country (Christofakis & Papadaskalopoulos, 2011) (Toy, 2016).

According to the World Bank (2013). Growth poles are one of the strategies to promote economic diversification, which is expected to provide jobs for local communities. The main key to sustainable tourism development is to include all the potential that exists in the region by involving all stakeholders (Okech et al., 2012). According to Sunuantari (2017) Community participation is key to achieving community empowerment so that the community is actively involved in all tourism activities. This requires a communication strategy that is tailored to the culture of the local community. Successful communication is able to encourage changes in community behavior according to mutual expectations.

Without community involvement and positive attitudes toward community-based tourism, sustainable development in the tourism sector will not be achieved (Mai et al., 2023). Some principles that can be used as a foundation to encourage the creation of local community development are as follows: (1) the recognition, support, and promotion of tourism activities managed by local

communities; (2) the involvement of local communities in all aspects of tourism activities carried out; (3) providing a sense of community pride in the existence of tourism; (4) ensuring that activities carried out can improve the quality of life; (5) allowing tourism to ensure the sustainability of the surrounding environment; (6) the preservation of the character and uniqueness of the existing local culture; (7) encouraging the development of cross cultural learning; (8) respect for the various differences that exist; (9) allowing the community to benefit from the activities carried out (Hermawati, 2020) (Isnaini, 2007). The role of local and central governments is needed to build partnerships with surrounding communities. Thus, collaborative governance is needed in sustainable tourism management. Collaboration is carried out with all stakeholders both directly and indirectly, oriented towards collective decisions to achieve common goals (Astuti et al., 2020).

### **Material and Methodology**

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach. According to (Salim, 2006), qualitative research has the following characteristics: (1) Research data is obtained directly in the field, not from a controlled research laboratory; (2) Data is extracted naturally; (3) Meaning is obtained in the form of answer categories developed based on scientific situations. The type of research used in this research is a case study. Case study research is designed to understand the characteristics of complex social phenomena in a holistic and meaningful way. Case studies can be used in different situations to contribute to our knowledge about individuals, groups, organizations, social, political, and other related phenomena (Yin, 2014). The research location is Garut Regency, West Java, Indonesia.

Data collection techniques based on the type of case study require six data sources, namely: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation to the research site, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). This research uses informants as resource persons, namely the parties involved in the development of sustainable tourism, in the face of weather changes in Garut Regency. Interviews were conducted with members of Community Information Group (KIM), Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), Youth Organization, Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK), members of the Disaster Emergency Response Team, and the government. According to (Yin, 2014), data analysis techniques in case studies include: examining, categorizing, tabulating, and testing. According to (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), qualitative research uses data validity testing which consists of 4 (four) triangulation techniques, namely: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. This research uses data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theory triangulation.

### **Result and Discussion**

Since Covid-19 public health emergency was declared over in 2023, there has been a phenomenon of tourism trend called "revenge tourism", a phenomenon of tourism serving as a means of revenge for tourists who have to curb their desire to travel due to the pandemic. As a result, tourists have made vacations an important priority. According to Trenburo, there are four main trends that will affect tourist behavior throughout 2023. They are: (1) End of Ambition, the desire of people to prioritize flexibility and healing for refreshing, so it will affect wellness tourism; (2) Embellished Escapism, the awareness of tourists to get unique experiences on vacation; (3) Always in Doubt, the behavior of tourists who start to be skeptical of the tourism sector; (4) Polycentric Lifestyle, the desire of tourists to find the uniqueness of each destination to visit (Kemenparekraf/Badan Pariwisata Ekonomi Kreatif RI, 2023).

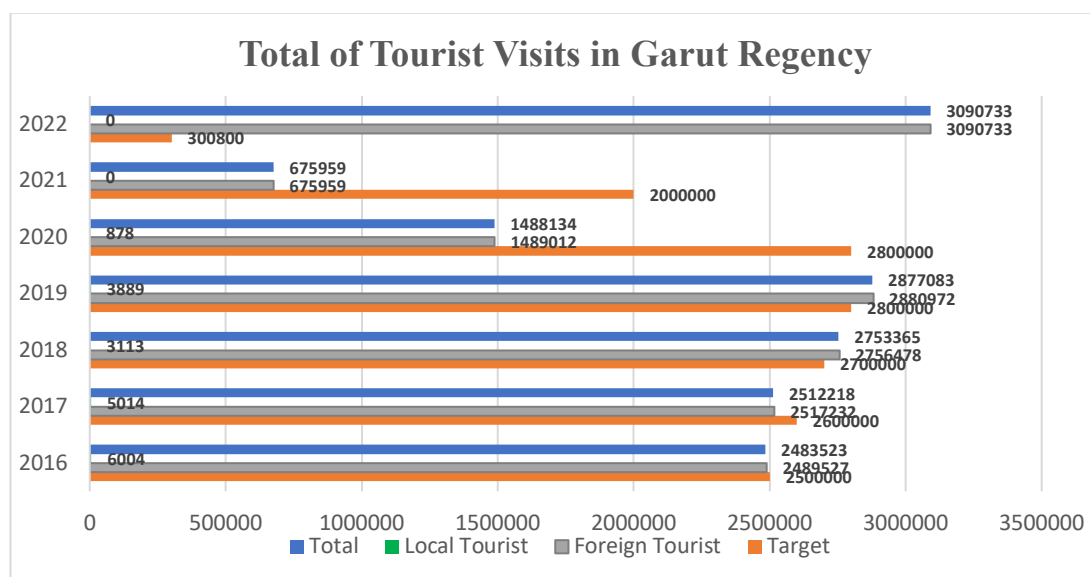
On the other hand, people who live in disaster-prone areas are traumatized by the re-management of existing tourism objects. The occurrence of disasters, both natural and non-natural, causes business actors to feel anxious, depressed, fearful, and even traumatized if the disaster recurs (Berliandaldo et al., 2023; Demartoto, 2019; Demeter, 2021). Therefore, local governments in different regions of Indonesia continue to persuade people to return to activities in the tourism sector. Various strategies are designed to increase local tourist visits in various Indonesian tourist destinations. Tourism resilience is inevitable in the realization of community welfare. This is because the tourism sector is one of the pillars of Indonesia's economy.

Garut Regency in West Java is one of the areas prone to disasters, especially natural disasters. However, Garut also has potential for local tourism because it has a variety of tourism commodities. Garut's natural beauty is one of the advantages of being a complete tourist destination. Various types of tourism in Garut support the Locally Generated Original Income (PAD). These include nature tourism,

beach tourism, mountain tourism, and artificial tourism (Tetep et al., 2021; Trihayuningtyas et al., 2019). Garut is even referred to as the Switzerland of Java (Lestari, 2019). This nickname was assigned by European tourists who visited Garut in the 19th century. The nickname Swiss van Java for Garut was written by Gottfried Roelcke and Garry Crabb by quoting a travel guide published by The Forbes in 1917, which wrote Switzerland van Java to describe Garut at that time. The Dutch East Indies Tourism Management Association, Vereeniging Toeristen Vekeer (VTV) called Garut Swiss van Java as a way of branding Garut.

The natural beauty of Garut makes the local government continue to implement various strategies and new breakthroughs to develop sustainable tourism in the regency. However, climate change causes various disasters, mostly floods and landslides, to affect Garut. As a result, it is difficult to access tourist destinations there in the event of disasters. The situation prompts the local government and community to jointly accelerate the handling of natural disasters. Despite the unfavorable topographical conditions, the Garut Regency Government continues to make various breakthroughs to promote tourist visits. A total of 132 pilot tourism villages have been built in 42 sub-districts in Garut. From 2016 to 2022, the number of tourists visiting Garut have fluctuated, especially in 2020-2021 when the Covid 19 pandemic caused a sharp decline in tourist visits. The number of foreign tourists decreased from 1,489,012 in 2020 to 675,959 in 2021. However, the figure increased sharply to 3,090,733 in 2022. Attached is the total number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting Garut Regency between 2016 and 2022 (Figure 1).

The increasing number of tourist visits has an impact on improving the economy of the Garut Regency community. Watersheds in the Garut region often cause floods and landslides. Human activities, sometimes excessive, cause damage to watersheds. Intensive watershed management is expected to ensure environmental sustainability for future generations. Watershed as an ecosystem is a unit of hills and mountains connected by various factors, including biotic, abiotic and human factors. Therefore, the utilization of watersheds requires community participation in sustainable tourism management. One of the activities carried out to increase the economic potential is the cultivation of kangkung (a vegetable type that has the closest resemblance to a water spinach) plants in the watershed area. Various activities carried out by the community are integrated with local government policies in natural disaster management and in dealing with climate change. The geographical condition of Garut, which is located in the watershed area, encourages the structuring of sustainable tourism development in Garut Regency. It is important to acknowledge the diverse perspectives and goals of all stakeholders involved in this coordinated arrangement. Collaboration among various stakeholders, including educational institutions, business actors, media, and existing communities, is essential to enhance the community's resilience in facing natural and non-natural disasters. By implementing sustainable tourism management strategies, we can encourage the creation of tourism resilience in Garut Regency.



**Figure 1.** Total Number of Tourist Visits in Garut Regency between 2016 and 2022  
 Source : Profile Garut Regency 2023

Tourism revitalization aims to increase the number of tourists by preserving, developing, and utilizing cultural arts in accordance with community dynamics. The quality of governance is ensured through participatory, integrated, and collaborative principles, while at the same time prioritizing sustainable tourism development. Local communities and the local government collaborate in handling natural disasters and conducting various disaster mitigation activities. The Garut community acknowledges the susceptibility of the Garut area to disasters and has successfully implemented various disaster management and mitigation strategies. Additionally, the community has made a joint commitment to developing and managing tourist destinations, resulting in an increase in the number of tourist visits. The approach of 'growing together' involves developing one tourist destination while also considering the development of others. Undeveloped tourist destinations can be fostered by other regions, including in the management of lodging businesses such as hotels. Partnerships can be formed to create a symbiotic relationship. Various existing tourism potentials can be developed together to improve the community's economy. The Garut Regency, which consists of 21 sub-districts, is well-positioned to take advantage of these opportunities and become a leading tourist destination in 2022 (Figure 2).

Collaboration was also carried out to revitalize Situ Bagendit tourist attraction by involving the Indonesian Ministry of Public Works and Housing (PUPR), Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transportation, West Java Provincial Government and district government. Situ Bagendit which has a land area of 2.8 hectares is divided into six zones. They are: Zone 1 for public tourism, Zone 2 for culinary area, Zone 3 for green school, Zone 4 for commercial area, Zone 5 for water sports area, and Zone 6 for mosque and conservation area. The arrangement of Situ Bagendit area is expected to improve the people's economy and promote the development of sustainable tourism in Garut Regency. The revitalization still prioritizes the sustainability of the situ (lake) function in support of natural resources (SDA). Situ Bagendit area which is located around the mountains is endowed with a beautiful natural environment. The area has a large lake that serves as a source of water for the life of the surrounding community. The local community utilizes the area by setting up a cooperative as a community economic enterprise in the management of tourist destinations. The cooperative was established in cooperation with the Pokdarwis community. The cooperative is a community economic movement based on the principle of kinship. The existence of the cooperative is able to promote community empowerment in the tourism economy sector.

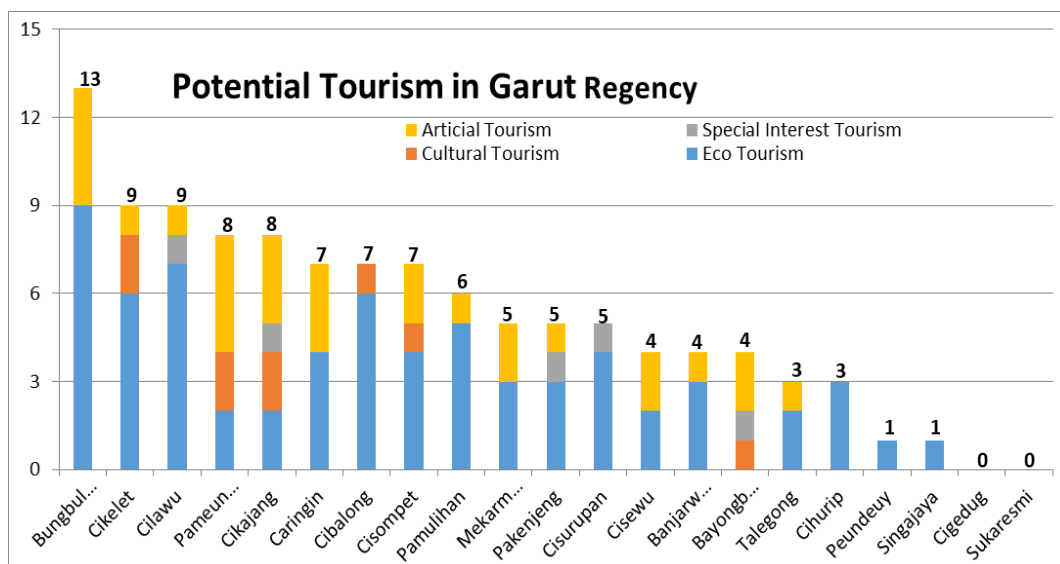


Figure 2. Potential Tourism in Garut Regency  
Source : Profile Garut Regency 2023

Tourism is the most important economic sector in Garut Regency in addition to agriculture and plantation. To develop the tourism potential, the Garut Regency Government applies the concept of Core Plasma Tourism. This concept is part of the Growth Pole Approach, which states that growth

points must be identified in tourism development. The core concept of tourism plasma implemented by the Garut Regency Government is to strongly promote tourist destinations that are already developed and developing as tourist destinations, while at the same time encouraging tourists to visit new tourist destinations that are not yet known to many people. The availability of facilities and infrastructure in new tourist destinations is often not maximized.

The new area is called a pilot tour, which is usually built by considering the tourism potential in the area. The existence of a growth pole policy will provide an opportunity for pioneer tourism areas to be recognized by visitors. The plasma core that is carried out emphasizes the community as the main actor in tourism management. Therefore, partnerships are needed with various parties, such as business actors who own hotels, tour operators or other businesses that can support the growth of sustainable tourism. As such, tourism can be developed as an enabler of pilot tourism areas. The existence of a plasma core provides an opportunity for new tourism to develop.

The awareness of people living in disaster-prone tourism areas is one of the driving forces in disaster management. This is because the initiative to deal with disasters comes from local communities, while they are not able to carry out disaster management activities on their own. Therefore, strengthening sustainable tourism in disaster-prone areas requires the cooperation of various parties, including the central government, local governments, media, volunteers, nature lovers, and various other social communities. Some of the social communities that are partners in the implementation of sustainable tourism strategies are the Family Welfare Empowerment Community (PKK), Youth Organization, Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), Community Information Group (KIM), Association of The Indonesian Tours and Agencies (ASITA), and other social community groups that are members of the Disaster Emergency Response Team. Community participation is a fundamental strength in sustainable tourism management, especially in disaster-prone areas. The community has a very important contribution to planning and evaluating tourism programs in each region. They know best the conditions in their own area, so they should also determine and implement programs according to the needs in their area. Strong cooperation and mutual support provide a positive force in the various activities undertaken.

Tourism Activator Group (Kompepar), as part of Pokdarwis, is a self-help group that has social activities, especially tourism. Pokdarwis aims to increase the understanding of tourism among the general public and group members. This is done so that the community/members can benefit from tourism activities to improve the economic welfare of the community (Punto Hendro & Nirmala, 2019). The purpose of establishing Pokdarwis is to promote the role of the community as a subject in tourism development. As a subject, the community can take advantage of the tourism potential in their respective areas so that their welfare is realized. The development of tourism potential must be carried out in cooperation with stakeholders and other partners involved in the tourism sector. Collaboration will improve the quality of sustainable tourism development and resilience. Pokdarwis acts as a driving force as well as a partner of the government and the district government in the development of sustainable tourism. This way, the benefits of tourism will be felt by the general public and especially by Pokdarwis members. Pokdarwis is formed at a village or *kelurahan* level, so that its existence can support the growth of pilot tourism villages.

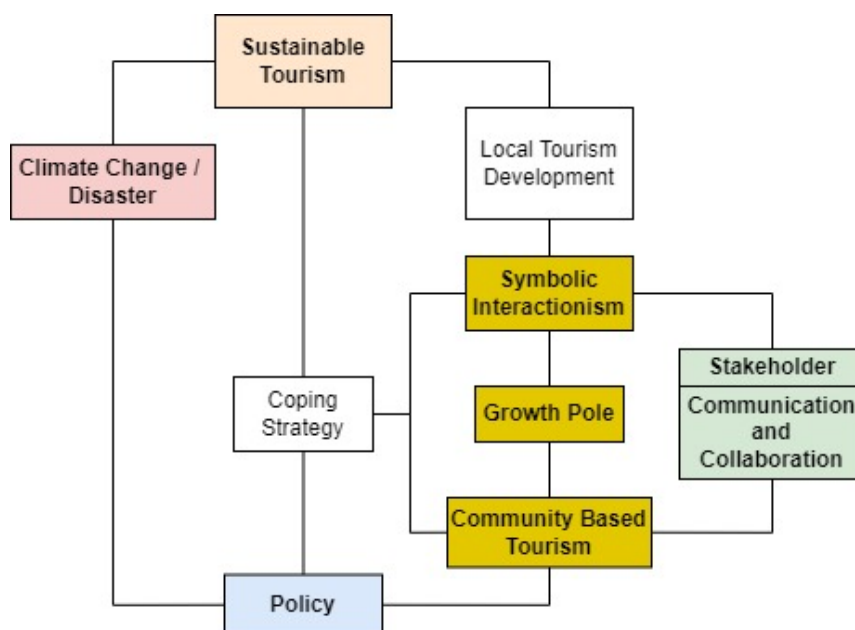
In addition to Pokdarwis, there is also the Community Information Group (KIM) of Garut Regency. KIM is also a community social institution formed and managed by, for and of the community, and aims at disseminating information and empowering community based on the needs of each region. KIM is formed in both urban and rural areas with members coming from students, college students, teachers, lecturers, farmers, fishermen, businessmen and so on. KIM members are both male and female. There is no age limit to become KIM members. By becoming KIM members, they are able to improve food needs, security, social, appreciation and self-realization. The realization of an innovative KIM is aimed at giving added value to members and the community through the use of information to achieve a prosperous society. Various activities are carried out by KIM to realize the information society.

KIM has the function of encouraging the community to be active, care about, become sensitive and understand the various information received so that it will be beneficial to all parties. KIM uses various media and communication channels KIM to support the achievement of public awareness not only as objects but also as subjects in making changes. The information received by KIM can be optimally managed so that it has economic value. Therefore, KIM as an information provider base in

the community at village and city levels can be a reference for the community to develop various activities that have an economic impact. It is necessary to disseminate information to the lower levels of society, especially in the current era of information flood. Therefore, true information is important in sustainable tourism management.

Tourism management based on the CBT concept has helped communities get various opportunities in developing tourism potential in their respective areas. Various information needed by the community can be utilized so that it has economic value. This will promote the realization of community welfare because job opportunities are increasingly open. The Indonesian government has the authority in tourism policy related to sustainable resource utilization for the benefit of the community. Therefore, CBT is important to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism in Indonesia (Junaid et al., 2021). In fact, sustainable tourism development in the neighboring country of Timor Leste is also based on the CBT network to achieve community development goals. The CBT network contributes to the long-term economic development of Timor Leste by promoting community autonomy in improving their livelihoods (Tolkach, 2013). Communication is also an important part of the stakeholder engagement process. Effective communication will promote the creation of a common understanding in sustainable tourism management due to the rapid growth of digital communication platforms and systems (Kencana et al., 2023). Based on the research findings of (Putri & Adinia, 2018), the communication dialogue conducted in sustainable tourism involves stakeholders to find out problems, goals and solutions, and discuss future plans that will be implemented according to the needs of local communities.

Based on the research results, the policies in sustainable tourism development in the face of climate change must involve all stakeholders. Communication and collaboration are important to determine the policies. Therefore, the implementation of the policies focuses on local communities as actors in sustainable tourism development. Following is the process of determining sustainable tourism communication policies.



**Figure 3.** Tourism Communication Policy in Sustainable Tourism and Climate Change in Garut Regency

## Conclusions

The results of the study show that sustainable tourism activities in the face of climate change and disasters need a communication strategy that is outlined in the form of a policy. The policy-making process must involve all stakeholders, so that the parties involved have the same meaning. Communication will be effective if it provides opportunities for all parties to exchange information. The exchange of both verbal and non-verbal symbols will facilitate the interaction process. Determining one tourism destination as a growth point will encourage tourists to visit other tours. The

implementation of the growth pole provides an opportunity for other tourist sites to develop together. Sustainable tourism development that focuses on CBT will provide opportunities for the community to be actively involved in various tourism activities. The community is not only an object, but also a subject in sustainable tourism development. Stakeholders' adaptation to climate change and natural disasters will facilitate the implementation of sustainable tourism.

Communication and collaboration have an important contribution to the cooperation process of all elements involved in sustainable tourism development, the resilience of local communities will be stronger because of each other's common understanding. This will facilitate the coordination process in the implementation of planned policies because they align with their respective needs. Collaboration between the central government, local governments, local communities, communities, media, business people, and academics is carried out to foster awareness of local communities that they are the main actors. Symbiotic mutualism will be built when all parties involved in tourism management feel the benefits. The government as a policy maker will find it easier in making policies because they are in line with the needs of each party. Local communities as the main actors will more quickly adapt to various changing conditions, especially in the face of climate change and natural disasters.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express gratitude to the National Taipei University and University of Al-Azhar Indonesia as the funder and supporters of this research.

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