

Stakeholders' Synergies in Developing Smart Tourism Destination. A Phenomenographic Study

by Nurdin Hidayah

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Table of Contents:

1	Designing an Adventure Tourism Package from the Preferences of the Visitors Mauricio CARVACHE-FRANCO, Wilmer CARVACHE-FRANCO, Orly CARVACHE-FRANCO, Aldo ALVAREZ-RISCO, Miguel ORDEN-MEJÍA, Xavier RECALDE-LINO	305
2	Stakeholders' Synergies in Developing Smart Tourism Destination. A Phenomenographic Study Nurdin HIDAYAH, Herlan SUHERLAN, Fajar Kusnadi Kusumah PUTRA	313
3	Antecedents of Tourists' Intentions to Visit in the Context of Coffee Tourism Usep SUHUD, Mamoon ALLAN, Vanessa GAFFAR	324
4	Theoretical and Methodological Fundamentals of the Modern Paradigm of Quality Management in the Field of Tourism Vadym Viktorovych BAYEV, Ivan Stepanovych BAKHOV, Tetiana Vitaliivna MIRZODAIEVA, Olena ROZMETOVA, Nataliya BORETSKAYA	338
5	Tourism Sustainability Strategy during New Normal Period for "Balkondes" in Borobudur Area Andhatu ACHSA, Rian DESTININGSIH, Fitrah Sari ISLAMI, Ivo NOVITANINGTYAS, Budi RAHARDJO	346
6	The Impact of Revolutions and Terrorist Attacks on Tourism. Case Study: Egypt Daniel BAKOTA, Magdalena MORGA, Arkadiusz PLOMINSKI, Mariusz RZETALA	354
7	Assessment of Service Quality of Leisure Center and the Intention to Revisit a Destination Ahmed ALSHIHA	367
8	Tourist Attraction Satisfaction Factors from Online Reviews. A Case Study of Tourist Attractions In Thailand Vimolboon CHERAPANUKORN, Prompong SUGUNNASIL	379
9	Challenges to Tourism Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Case of Malawi Mathews LAMBULIRA, Felix G. BELLO	391
10	Analyzing the Factors that Influence the Entrepreneur Business Performance of Tourism Destination of Kuala Terengganu City Centre, Malaysia Muhammad Abi Sofian Abdul HALIM, Nurul Farahiyah AWANG, Khatijah OMAR, Jumadil SAPUTRA, Siti Nor Adawiyah Azzahra KAMARUDDIN, Hazman SAMSUDIN	403
11	Beach Area Development Strategy as the Prime Tourism Area in Indonesia HAILUDDIN, Mukmin SURYATNI, Imamudin YULIADI, Syarwani CANON, SYAPARUDDIN, ENDRI	414
12	Banking Risks and Lending to Tourism and Hotel Businesses amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Gulnur KOZHAMZHAROVA, Lutpulla OMARBAKIYEV, Oksana KOGUT, Saule ZHUMASHEVA, Anelya SAULEMBEKOVA, Gulnar ABDRAKHMANOVA	427
13	The Effect of Social Marketing Strategy on Urban Tourism Growth and Economic Development in Zanjan, Iran Toktam SALARI, Omar YOUSEFI, Hossein AZIMI	438

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14	A Literature Review of Efficiency Issues in Tourism Abylkair ASKEYEV, Raissa BAIZHOLOVA	445
15	Cultural Tourism in Developed Island Tourist Destinations: The Development of an Alternative Tourism Model In Corfu Georgios KONTOGEOGRIS, Nikolaos VAROTSIS	456
16	Hotellogy - A New Branch of Philosophy of Science SUGIYANTO, Ardi SURWIYANTA, Hermawan PRASETYANTO, MUSOLI	466
17	Sustainable Tourism Recovery amid the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Case Study of the Phuket Sandbox Scheme Hongrui ZHU, Mehri YASAMI	477
18	Study of the Effects of Marketing Mix and Service Quality on Tourists' Decisions Dwi Septi HARYANI, Octojaya ABRIYOSO, Sri KURNIA	486
19	Evaluation of the Main Performance Indicators of 4 and 5-Star Hotels using the Example of the Nur-Sultan City, Kazakhstan Assem BEKBULATOVA, Bakyt SYZDYKBAYEVA, Rina AGYBETOVA, Zhanar DULATBEKOVA, Zhaxylyk AKIMOV	497
20	Topical Issues in the Field of Religious Tourism: Current Challenges Svitlana PANCHENKO, Olena KAROPOL, Oleksandr CHUCHALIN, Tetiana KOLISNYCHENKO, Kateryna SEFIKHANOVA, Ievgeniia DRAGOMIROVA	507
21	Modelling Tourist's Intention to Adopt Travel Applications during the Pandemic: A Bangladeshi Perspective S.M. Shariful HAQUE, Chhali UDDIN, Ashiful ISLAM, Mahedi HASAN	515
22	A Study Architectural and Intangible Environment Affecting Occupancy Rate of Five Stars Business Hotel in Amman Emad Al Dein Al FAHMAWEE, Omar A. A. JAWABREH	530
23	Villages' Revitalization Supports a Sustainable Agritourism in Albania Anila SULAJ, Arben TËRPOLLARI, Brunilda KONDI	546
24	Comparative Bibliometric Analysis of the Concepts of "Ecotourism" and "Agrotourism" in the Context of Sustainable Development Economy Oleh VYSOCHAN, Natalia STANASIUK, Mykhailo HONCHAR, Vasyi HYK, Natalia LITVYNENKO, Olha VYSOCHAN	561
25	The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Nature-Based Tourism in National Parks. Case Studies for Poland Mateusz ROGOWSKI	572
26	National and European Actions for the Development of Rural Areas - Stimulus for Ensuring the Sustainability of Economic Development Teodor Marian COJOCARU, Ramona PÎRVU, Sorin DINULESCU, Lili ȚENEĂ	586

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the stakeholders' synergies in realising smart tourism destination. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenography approach. We adopted stakeholders' theory to valued stakeholder roles and perception in pursuing sustainability, competitiveness and managing smart tourism destination in Wonosobo, Indonesia. In-depth interviews with five main stakeholders' namely local government, media, tourism business, tourism community, and travel bloggers followed by three phenomenography qualitative data analysis stages. The findings have revealed some obstacles in implementing smart tourism from stakeholders' perspectives, such as human resource's ability, stakeholders' synergy, and government support. This study has also revealed six factors: public system development, digital promotion, Internet infrastructure, public and private sectors partnership, and human resources development to support smart tourism. This study has proposed the strategic plan for the local government to support smart tourism destinations, namely: partnerships, government support, human resource's ability, and tourism business competitiveness, that will lead to smart tourism destinations. This study has provided a framework and managerial implication accordingly.

Keywords: Destination; Phenomenography; Smart Tourism; Stakeholder Theory; Synergies.

JEL Classification: O33; Z32; Z33; Z38.

Introduction

In the past two decades, information and communication technologies (ICTs) has created a helpful innovation that enhance organisation performances, without exception in tourism service ecosystems (Buhalis 2020). ICTs have transformed tourism industry structures, processes, and practices with innovation. Smart tourism has been driving significant changes for the industry; it has become a new catalyst to support tourism development by the transformation of the conventional way in developing, managing, and marketing tourism destinations to using the advance of technologies systems (Gretzel, Sigala, *et al.* 2015). A recent study mainly discusses the influence of technologies on tourists' perceptions, experiences and the effects of smart tourism on consumers and the development of tourism destination technology application (Mehraliyev *et al.* 2020; Ye, Ye and Law 2020). While most studies discuss smart tourism's concept and ideal images, smart tourism stakeholders' perspectives remain

rare (Buhalis and Amaranggana 2013, Gretzel, Sigala, *et al.* 2015). Given the importance of stakeholders' role in innovative tourism destination development, it is necessary to show what factors make destinations successful in developing smart tourism and the role of stakeholders' synergy in this process. To the best of our knowledge, there is no earlier study to explore synergies between stakeholders' in developing smart tourism destinations. To acknowledge the research gap, this study aims to investigate the stakeholders' synergies in developing smart tourism destinations. This study also identifies challenges of smart tourism destination, identify efforts given by the stakeholders in realising smart tourism destinations, and to identify how stakeholders can establish synergies in developing smart tourism destinations.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Smart Tourism

Buhalis and Amaranggana (2013) explained that technological developments had changed conventional ways in managing tourism into something smart. According to Buhalis (2020), the term "smart" can be described as technological, economic and social evolution depending on the Internet of Things (IoT), social media, smart devices, mobile applications (Apps), gamification, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), blockchain and cryptocurrencies that will enhance connectivity and networked exchange of information. The term of smart tourism destination has intricately linked to big data, which can represent connectivity and competitive advantage for destinations utilising tourism-related applications (Del Vecchio *et al.* 2018).

Smart tourism will help integrate tourism resources and ICTs by take advantage of systems to improve the tourist experience and their satisfaction, increase resource management effectiveness, maximise competitiveness, and demonstrating sustainability for the tourism destinations (Buhalis and Amaranggana 2013). Smart tourism have been studied in terms of model, tool, and strategies to maintain destination organisation (Gretzel, Sigala, *et al.* 2015). According to Nindito *et al.* (2020), smart tourism destinations objectives are to improve the visitor experience by providing a smart platform (model) for education, information, and recommendation services within destinations. While in their study, Caragliu, Del Bo, and Nijkamp (2011) found that smart tourism destinations are characterised by sophisticated services, high-level innovation, and integrated, openly shared processes to improve the quality of life of residents and tourists.

Previous studies on smart tourism have used technology and consumer behaviour theories such as the technology acceptance model (TAM), theory of planned behaviour, and perceived value theory related to tourist perceptions (Ye, Ye and Law 2020). Smart tourism facilitate more efficient allocation of resources (*i.e.*, Infrastructure, funding, human resources, collaboration and promotion) (Ye, Sun and Law 2021); thus, resources should be integrated with tourism suppliers at the macro-level such as government and micro levels such as tourism business, local communities, visitor, and tourism supplier (Shafiee *et al.* 2019; Hidayah and Suherlan 2020). There are many obstacles faced in realising the concept of a smart tourism destination, such as a lack of synergy between stakeholders. Their interests are not always in accord with each other because they have different points of view; therefore, smart tourism destination development requires commitment and synergy between stakeholders (Hidayah and Suherlan 2020; Nilsson 2007).

1.2. Stakeholder Theory

Tourism development is characterised by various interests and trade-offs between stakeholders, where the collaboration between stakeholders are sometimes intricate (Timur and Getz 2008). In the tourism context, stakeholders have been identified as behavioural groups such as the government-private sector, community, residents and visitors (Hardy and Pearson 2018, Hardy 2005). Stakeholders represent different objectives and at the same time have interdependency by recognising common interests, creativity, benefits, developing and implementing the stakeholders' ideas (Nilsson 2007).

Stakeholder theory has been used widely accepted approach in managing a business, regional development, and ensuring the development of an organisation responsively and properly (Bornhorst, Ritchie, and Sheehan 2010; Byrd 2007; Byrd and Gustke 2007). Stakeholder theory is based on organisational context, with various individuals and groups in one organisation are reciprocally supported and influenced by the same organisational goals (Freeman 2010). In the tourism context, stakeholders' theory is used in several studies such as managing festival (Getz, Andersson, and Larson 2006), flagship attraction (Nilsson 2007), management for rural destinations (Nicolaidis 2015), management and policy for destination competitiveness (Zehrer and Hallmann 2015), corporate social responsibility and performances (Theodoulidis *et al.* 2017), residents attitudes (Lundberg 2017), and community involvement for sustainable tourism (Khazaei, Elliot and Joppe 2015, Roxas, Rivera and Gutierrez 2020). It is important to note that collaboration between different actors within tourism are

crucial in creating valuable tourism products (Tinsley and Lynch 2001).

According to Beritelli and Laesser (2011), stakeholders can be given the authority to mediate disputes or prevent potential conflicts. Therefore, the involvement and interaction of relevant stakeholders are critical to achieving organisational goals and maintaining success, stakeholders should be stimulated to take part in concerted actions (Randle and Hoye 2016). While earlier studies have emphasised more on the value of stakeholder roles, pursuing sustainability, competitiveness and managing destinations, cohesive collaboration among stakeholders or we call synergy in tourism destination is remain scarce. Therefore, future study on stakeholder synergy in managing tourism destination is needed.

1.3. Stakeholder Synergy

Synergy can be defined as a "Situation where two different activities (processes or subjects) stand one to other in such a complementary way that their combined result is bigger or more significant than a simple sum of their single results" (Cetinski and Perić 2005, p.362). Synergy or collaborative action is the core principle of sustainable development in the participatory process, where stakeholders and the local community can actively achieve their goals together (Dredge 2006).

Previous research discussed tourism stakeholders synergistic in terms of public and private sector partnership (Cetinski and Perić 2005), creating tourism demand in destination (Gomezelj Omerzel 2011), developing tourism business in urban area (Marques and Santos 2016), destination marketing (Line and Wang 2017), and solidarity and ethical tourism (Dangi 2018). More recently, studies have focused on sustainable tourism initiatives (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2019, Lin and Simmons 2017), cooperative extension service for responsible tourism attraction (Feyers, Stein, and Klizentyte 2020), and benefits, barriers and key elements for smart tourism implementation (Ye, Sun and Law 2021). However, to the best of our knowledge the earlier study has not explored synergies between stakeholders in developing smart tourism destination. Therefore, to acknowledge this research gap, this study aims to investigate the stakeholders' synergies in smart tourism destinations.

2. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenography approach. Phenomenography is a qualitatively interpretive research approach to better understand how people experience aspects of their world and map shared consensus on what is happening (Marton 1986; Abreu Novais, Ruhanen and Arcodia 2018; Marton 1992). According to Ryan (2000), phenomenographic analysis is a study of what people perceive in the world, and learning relates to an experience of doing things in one place. Previous research on phenomenography study used data interviews as a data collection method, where sampling for interviews is performed purposively (Cotterell *et al.* 2020). We used the phenomenography approach because it will gives a holistic point of view about a phenomenon in this context smart tourism, which is very important in providing novelty and exploring stakeholders perspectives about smart tourism destinations.

Table 1. Demographics interviewed participants

Participants Code	Gender	Age	Type of Stakeholder
Participant one	Male	Mid 50s	Local government
Participant two	Male	Mid 30s	Local media
Participant three	Male	Early 40s	Local tourism business
Participant four	Male	Mid 30s	Tourism community
Participant five	Male	Mid 20s	Travel blogger

Source: Authors own elaboration

In this study, we explored stakeholder synergy for smart tourism destination in the Dieng tourism area where the Wonosobo regency is selected as the destination locust. Dieng tourism area is one of the success stories on how the smart tourism concept is being implemented in Wonosobo regency (Herlan, Nurdin and Wientor 2019). Wonosobo is the entrance gate to the Dieng tourism area located in Central Java, Indonesia. Wonosobo has been part of a digital tourism platform called Central Java etourism since year 2014. According to Abreu Novais, Ruhanen, and Arcodia (2018) selecting a specific destination is needed to provide a complete description of the individuals who represent the particular stakeholder group. Further explained that interviewers and participants will focus more on the topics discussed at the time of the interview. The selection of participants for the phenomenographic study is purposive, the purpose is to capture the greatest possible variation in perspectives, and the variation in sample characteristics is a crucial aspect of the phenomenography study

(Novais 2022). In this study five different stakeholders were interviewed, the demographic characteristics of the participants' details are shown in Table 1.

In depth face-to-face interviews with five stakeholders were conducted in Bahasa. By using local language in interview will allows the participants to speak freely and deeply about the problematic synergy between stakeholders. The interviews were conducted by asking general questions about the development of smart tourism in Wonosobo, with three main questions namely: to analyse the problems in the application of smart tourism, the efforts that have been made in terms of implementing smart tourism and the main factors in the development smart tourism. The interview was recorded, and the interview lasted between 60 minutes to 120 minutes.

In order to maintain the validity and reliability of this research, the three stages of the phenomenographic research method suggested by Abreu Novais, Ruhanen, and Arcodia (2018) conducted as follow: first, the identification of each participant answers by repeated reading the transcripts. Second, the similar conceptions between participants put in the same group. Third, mapping the conceptions into logically and hierarchically ordered set in experiencing the phenomenon. The result of the interviews was transcribed and then translated to English by two authors. We also sent back the transcriptions to the participants for member checking to make sure the answers obtained was accordance with actual conditions and those participant can verify their answers so that the validity and credibility of the research were met. Finally, all the participants filled out participants consent forms. Qualitative data analysis software Nvivo version 11 were used for the coding process. Based on the interviews with informants, direct observations, combined with relevant literature used in this study, we unified related concepts in realising smart tourism destinations. The findings are divided into three categories which are challenges for smart tourism destination, efforts in realizing smart tourism destination, and stakeholders synergies for smart tourism destination.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Challenges for Smart Tourism Destination

Based on interviews with all stakeholders involves for smart tourism implementation in Wonosobo, we found some challenges that classified into three dimensions which are: (1) human ability, (2) stakeholder synergy, and (3) government support. Based on the three dimensions, six emergent categories for implementing smart tourism in Wonosobo are human resources professionalism, community involvement, business compliance, stakeholders' compactness, government policy, and financial budget allocation for tourism (see Table 2).

Table 2. Stakeholders' perceptions on challenges for smart tourism destination in Wonosobo

Dimensions	Emergent Categories	Concern Primarily from
Human ability	Human resources professionalism, community involvement	Local government and local media
Stakeholders' synergy	Tourism business compliance, stakeholders' compactness	All stakeholders
Government support	Government policy, financial budget allocation for tourism	All stakeholders

Source: Authors own elaboration

Based on the interviewed participant one from the local government representative, mentioned that there is already coordination between stakeholders in performing smart tourism in Wonosobo. However, some barriers found such as human resources competency (*i.e.*, tourism official and local tourism communities) and their knowledge in information and technology. Moreover, the work ethic from the government employees in terms of creativity and responsibility are still below expectations. Participant one is also concerned about inconsistency in implementing tourism policy, because the rotation and gradually changes in tourism officials that leads to inconsistent policies and the policy sometime just stopped by their successor. While participant two from the local media is more concerned about information content and variation available on the Internet about Wonosobo tourism. He also concerned on the challenges such as lack of awareness of tourism promotion by the stakeholders, inconsistency of entrance ticket tariffs in tourist attraction, transportation connectivity, and lack of tourists' facilities in tourism attractions.

Participant three as the local tourism business representative has mentioned business compliance and stakeholder synergies and coordination between tour operators to create an exciting narrative and information about smart tourism in Wonosobo. He added that there is still a lack of cooperation between local government and other stakeholders as a foremost thing in realising smart tourism destinations in Wonosobo. He said that very few tour operators has standards of tourism service ethics and legality of tourism business. Another concern was the limited budget from the regional government given for the progress of tourism digitalisation infrastructure.

From the perspectives of tourism communities, participant four has mentioned the difficulty of educating all stakeholders about the concept of smart tourism. Human resources are not ready in the digitalisation process, making the synergy process relatively hampered. He suggests that socialisation from the government is crucial to give the same vision and direction in implementing innovative tourism initiatives. The absence of local government in coordinating among stakeholders is another fundamental obstacle. While from the perspectives of participant five, he mentioned that there is a lack of harmony between local communities and the government. Communities still have not considered the importance of smart tourism and digitalisation for the destination. He mentioned that there is egocentric between communities, governments, and other stakeholders.

All the participants are concerned about the awareness of local government in socialising policy for smart tourism destinations consistently. They also mentioned on budget allocation in promoting Wonosobo (e.g., incentive to conduct digital promotions using social media), and fundings to increase ICTs and internet network infrastructure. Moreover, government and media representative share the same consensus that digitalisation in tourism destinations needs constant training, integration and sharing processes because it will improve the quality of tourism experiences not only for the tourists but also for the residents in the long term (Caragliu, Del Bo, and Nijkamp 2011).

3.2. Efforts in Realizing Smart Tourism Destination

With many challenges faced, stakeholders have suggested various efforts to improve the quality of smart tourism destination in Wonosobo regency as it shown in table 3.

Table 3. Efforts in realizing smart tourism destinations in Wonosobo from the stakeholders' perspectives

Dimensions	Emergent Categories	Concern Primarily from
Effectiveness of Internet of Thing (IoT) use	Public transport system, digitalization for tourism promotion, Internet infrastructure	All the stakeholders
Public – private partnership	Stakeholder collaboration	All the stakeholders
Human resources development	Training, local community awareness	Local tourism communities

Source: Authors own elaboration

All the stakeholders agree to improve the effectiveness of IoT used and public and private sector partnership. Local government participant in this study has highlighted on public system development, and digitalisation for tourism destination promotion including on the social media platform (e.g., Facebook, Instagram). Moreover, website-based, or mobile apps hubs are used to integrate with other sectors such as the creative industry (e.g., souvenirs, culinary, and performing arts), food raw materials (e.g., agriculture, fishery, and animal husbandry). The participants also concern on the public transportation system, they mentioned that revitalisation and integration of transportation terminals with more reliable public transportation system (i.e., scheduling, booking, connectivity, introducing e-ticketing system) as one of the solutions for the accessibility to tourism attractions in Wonosobo.

All the stakeholders said that collaboration in Wonosobo smart tourism initiatives is dependent on the coordination between local government and other stakeholders. Collaboration for smart tourism destination is between internal stakeholders such as tourism and hospitality business (i.e., accommodation, restaurant, transportation, local travel agent, and tourism attraction) and external stakeholders (i.e., visitors, travel agent both offline and online, competitor and complementary destinations, the provincial and central government). The coordination between internal and external stakeholders can be in the form of tourism strategy formulation, coordination in tourism promotion and branding, encourage the local tourism awareness, standardisation for tourism attractions, ticketing price, and communication to the tourism stakeholders.

Participant one added that tourism regulation should be based on operationalising government regulations, ministerial, provincial, and local government strategic plans. Moreover, collaboration with other regulators such as communication and information departments will integrate smart city system infrastructure, including database for tourism information and community will supports capturing business opportunities to supply tourism services based on IoT. Local government in this case local tourism authority should also collaborate with tourism communities, journalists, bloggers, academicians, in form of communication and information service contents. Participant one also concerned about the contribution of academia in Wonosobo, because there are no universities involved in Wonosobo tourism development. Hence, collaboration with academia will help them develop tourism plan concepts based on research.

Participant two has mentioned that efforts made by local government limited to informing their institutions profiles. He suggests that activities related to coordinating tourism activities, knowledge for tourism digitalisation,

and government support for the development of digital tourism areas should be more intense. For example, he mentioned that collaboration with local travel agents, tourism businesses, and local guides, in managing standardise e-ticketing system for better distribution and price. In this case, the local tourism office must communicate, coordinate, and provide full support for the collaboration initiative and digitalisation in tourism sector.

From the tourism business perspective, participant three mentioned that smart tourism in Wonosobo is support by the private sectors, they given efforts to encourage several tourism villages to adopt digital technology to support their operation and online booking optimally. Several initiatives such as conduct training for tour operators, guides, installation of hardware and software for the technology adaptation for the community and tourism businesses. However, participant three mentioned that the government gives no financial support for these initiatives. Therefore, the private sector should be more creative in finding financial sources. Second, implementation of digital promotion about Wonosobo tourism, the coordination with local tourism communities such as Pokdarwis, GenPi, Indonesian travel associations (ASITA) in promoting tourism by using website, social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram), travel blog, and online travel agent especially by the tour operators.

Participant four shared the same view that the local government effort limited to tourism promotion. He suggests that the local government collaborate more with tourism communities by recruiting and coordinating tourism trending topics teams to promote Wonosobo tourism digitally. While as travel blogger, participant five has mentioned that effort in developing smart tourism by educating the importance of IoT utilisation to the communities. He also mentioned that at present, efforts made by the local government limited to the supply side of the accommodation (i.e., homestays, tourism village), and awareness for cleanliness around tourist attractions. He urges that the local tourism office as a regulator to enhance innovative tourism development to promote Wonosobo as smart destinations. These efforts can be emerged from the communities such as millennial traveler communities. One of the established communities is *Generasi Pesona Indonesia* (GenPi) as tourism volunteer community promoting digital tourism, which is one of the tourism marketing strategies formed initiated by Ministry of Tourism the Republic of Indonesia GenPi consist of netizens who like social media, travel bloggers. They are also conducting group travelling, photography, videography, and blog writing mainly about travel and tourism in Indonesia (Dharmajaya *et al.* 2020). GenPi has sought to elevate Wonosobo tourism destinations and districts in cyberspace, such as promotion for a calendar of events, tourism attractions, and cultural heritages diversity. Maximising the trending team topic to expose promotional material digitally will reach a bigger audience than using the only official website. While another local tourism community, such as *Kelompok Sadar Wisata* (Pokdarwis), is a local community whose members consist of tourism actors that are concerned and act as a driver in supporting the growth and development of tourism in specific destinations in Indonesia (Putri and Adinia 2018). In the case of Wonosobo, Pokdarwis has promoted several accommodations through the OTA channel (e.g. Traveloka).

From the findings, it was revealed that there are six emergent categories in helping Wonosobo tourism in realising smart tourism, including (1) public development system, (2) digital promotion, (3) Internet infrastructures, (4) stakeholder collaboration, (5) government support, and (6) people development. Three main dimensions arise as an effort to realise smart tourism in Wonosobo, including effective Internet-of-things (IoT) use, public-private partnership, and human resources development, including for local communities, local tourism business, and local government tourism authority personnel.

3.3. Stakeholders Synergies for Smart Tourism Destination

In the last section of interviews with all participants, how synergising tourism stakeholders in realising smart tourism destinations in Wonosobo. Participant one said that the critical factor that supports stakeholders' synergies in Wonosobo is cooperation management between local government and other local and regional governments in Central Java province. Cooperation management with regional governments can develop main tourist attractions in two or more districts to develop and sustain these tourism objects. Synergy can be done in the form of transportation system integration, joint promotion, complementary (non-competitive) tour package policies, sharing data and information to optimise Central Java smart tourism initiative, that has been started since 2014.

The local media support the initiatives of synergies between stakeholders in form of openness on tourism activities. This mean, there should be cohesiveness from the local governments in developing tourism needs to be supported by central, regional, and local governments. Digitalisation in tourism destination has become more crucial for developing smart tourism not only in local tourism destinations but also in for Indonesia as destination. The active role of local government is needed to embrace all interested stakeholders in developing smart tourism.

From the local tourism business perspective, tourism stakeholders should take the opportunities in transforming their business to be more digital by utilising digital platforms (*i.e.*, OTA's, websites, and social media). He suggests that coordination forum between tourism business and local government should be arranged more often, for example training on digitalisation for tourism businesses can be conducted by local government and the private sector. The participants including but not limited to local tourism business such as tour operators, restaurants, and hotels owner.

Participant five highlighted on the unity of vision, shared commitment, and awareness on the importance of smart tourism. As the representatives of the local tourism communities' perspectives, they highlighted the local government intervention and support in setting up tourism standards. Coordination between stakeholders, especially with local tourism businesses and communities, is crucial to affect the development of smart tourism destinations. In overall, five participants in this study have given a consensus on four dimensions that can be used as references as a critical factor to build synergy between stakeholders in realising smart tourism namely: (1) partnership, (2) government support, (3) human capacity, and (4) private competitiveness. Moreover, six emergent categories derived from four dimensions which are cooperation management and government compactness (partnership); government involvement; knowledge in smart tourism knowledge and human resources development (human capacity) and tourism business competitiveness.

The microenvironment which includes social and cultural conditions and the macro environment of the destination including technology, ecology, economic and political condition will also influence the dynamic of smart tourism implementation in the future. The application of smart tourism destinations concepts requires stakeholders who are interrelated with the help technology platform, this will enhance the creation and facilitation of tourism experiences in real-time, increase the effectiveness of destination management such as neural systems (Buhalis 2020; Hidayah and Suherlan 2020). Moreover, managing tourism destinations needs to involve stakeholders such as private companies, government, community, and residents (Zehrer and Hallmann 2015; Lundberg 2017; Khazaee, Elliot and Joppe 2015). The synergy between tourism stakeholders includes necessary elements, benefits, product attributes, operational approaches, resources, and competitive capabilities to survive and thrive (Deardorff and Williams 2006; Feyers, Stein and Klizentyte 2020; Ye, Sun and Law 2021).

Smart tourism will be closely related to the human resources capability and fully supported by the government and synergy between stakeholders as the primary concern (Shafiee *et al.* 2019; Hidayah and Suherlan 2020; Ye, Sun, and Law 2021). Innovation in ICTs with the support of human resources competence will become a critical components of smartness integration in the strategic management process (Gretzel, Sigala, *et al.* 2015; Boes, Buhalis and Inversini 2016; Gretzel, Werthner, *et al.* 2015). The uses of the technology ecosystem have improved the residents quality of life and increased the efficiency (Gascó 2016; Khan *et al.* 2017). Digitalisation in the tourism industry has brought connectivity and inclusion for tourism destinations. Integration of digitalisation policy in tourism area and collaboration with local communities will ensure sustainable development for destination (Salemink, Strijker and Bosworth 2017; Roberts *et al.* 2017).

This study has three managerial implications. First, the Wonosobo tourism office needs to give information about smart tourism development to all stakeholders. They need to coordinate and synergise with the provincial government about the declaration of Central Java etourism initiatives and socialise it to all existing stakeholders. As mentioned from previous study on smart tourism implementation, that requires leadership, vision and a clear set of goals for innovation, continuous evaluation and change (Buhalis 2020; Başer, Doğan and Al-Turjman 2019). Second, government should conduct training to all stakeholders about elements related to smart tourism such as digital marketing training and tourism product packaging and marketing for the tourism office officials, tourism businesses, and local tourism communities such as GenPi, Pokdarwis. These findings add to previous studies on managing and marketing tourism destinations (Mehraliyev *et al.* 2020; Gretzel, Sigala, *et al.* 2015). Third, the Wonosobo tourism office should hire expert or personnel that has experiences in managing information technology for tourism related purposes. There is a need to accelerate the implementation of e-ticketing in tourism attractions by involving all stakeholders such as travel agents, tourism business, online travel agents, tourist attraction management.

Conclusion

This study has found four concepts of synergy between stakeholders for the smart tourism implementation, which are: (1) partnerships, (2) government support, (3) human capacity, and (4) personal competitiveness. The four concepts are interrelated, and in the process, they can influence by local community socio-cultural factors. We also found that the main challenges in implementing smart tourism are human resources, community involvement, compliance with business actors, compactness of stakeholders, government policies, and financial

budget. This finding has added to the study on smart tourism destinations in emerging and developing countries. The result of this study has confirm that several actions can be taken, such as investing in human resources, levels of government participation, and supporting infrastructure to disseminate information about smart tourism destination development (Buhalis and Amaranggana 2013; Khan *et al.* 2017). This study suggests that local governments take strategic steps that include public system development, digital promotion, stakeholder collaboration, fundings, and developing human resources. From this study it can be revealed that full support from the government is found crucial for the smart tourism destination, given its strategic role of the government in the form of regulation and policy power to maintain an organised environment that consists of multi-stakeholders will help in mediating conflict (Beritelli and Laesser 2011). Smart tourism will bring a new paradigm and ecosystem to the stakeholders for utilising technology to resume safe travel, especially in an uncertain situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Lee, Hunter and Chung 2020; Kontogianni, Alepis and Patsakis 2022; Messori and Escobar 2021)

This study is without limitation; the results of this study cannot be generalised, as we study from the perspectives of local tourism stakeholders limited in one destination. Further studies are needed in testing the four concepts synergy between stakeholders for smart tourism (*i.e.*, partnerships, human capacity, private sector competitiveness, and government support) through bigger scale research by asking the perspectives of other stakeholders such as tourists, central and regional government, residents, and academia.

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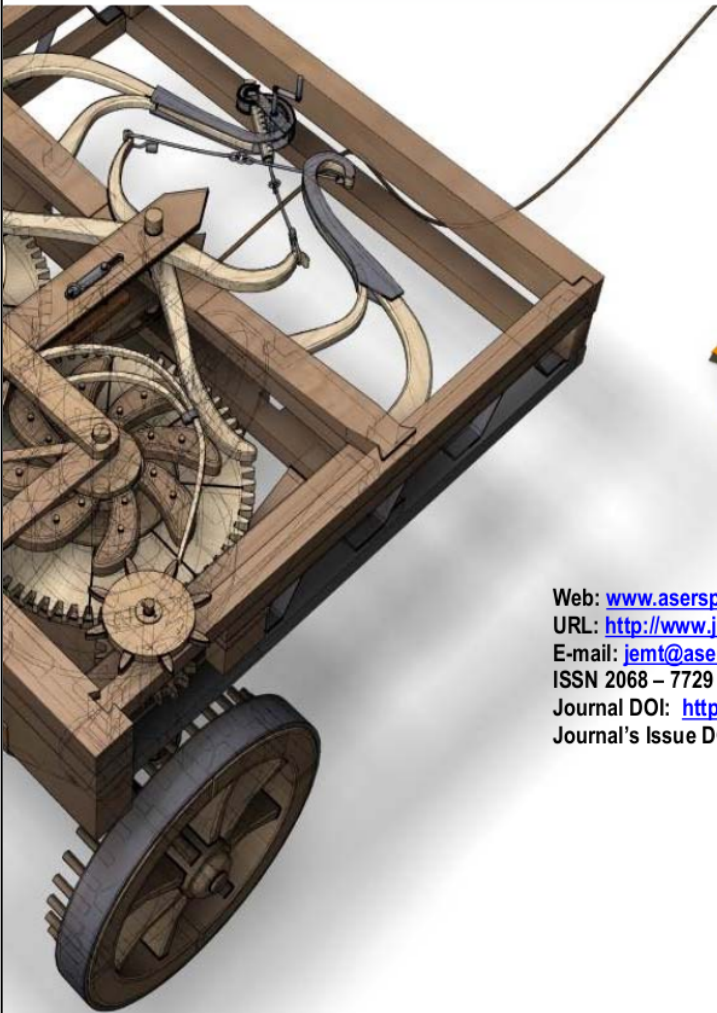
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