

Exploring Cultural-Based Ecotourism Destination Branding in the village of Ranu Pani

¹ Alfi Fatin Nabilah; ² Reza Safitri.

^{1,2} School of Communication Sciences, Brawijaya University, Indonesia

E-mail : alfifatinnabilah@gmail.com

Abstrak

Cultural tourism has a very important role in displaying the unique heritage of an area that becomes a tourist destination. Apart from having tourism potential in terms of the beauty of its geomorphological landscape, Ranu Pani Village also has a wealth of authentic customs and culture that has been passed down from generation to generation, so it has the potential to become a tourist attraction. Pokdarwis, as one of the destination management organizations in Ranu Pani Village, has a very strategic role in developing the potential of Ranu Pani Village. This study aims to describe the destination branding efforts made by Pokdarwis to develop culture-based ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village. This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Researchers made direct observations of the field to collect data by conducting interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of the study show that the destination branding efforts carried out by Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani are running effectively with the collaboration between local communities, the government, outsiders, and NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) who have contributed to developing culture-based ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village.

Keywords: *Destination Branding, Ecotourism, Cultural Tourism, Ranu Pani, Pokdarwis..*

Introduction

Tourism is a sector that contributes quite a large amount of foreign exchange and GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to the country; this has made this sector continue to be studied for its sustainability to date (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2020). Recognizing this great potential, the Government of Indonesia began to manage the Indonesian tourism industry as one of the important aspects whose existence began to be considered because this is considered a source of state income that will have an impact on improving the community's economy in the future.

Based on these facts, the Government of Indonesia, in this case, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, considers that tourism in Indonesia has great development potential. This statement is supported by President Joko Widodo's determination of 10 priority tourism areas, which are stated in

Mandate of the President, through the Cabinet Secretariat letter Number B 652/Seskab/Maritim/2015 dated 6 November 2015, which discussed the Mandate of the President of the Republic of Indonesia relating to Tourism and Presidential Directives at the Early Years Cabinet Meeting on 4 January 2016 (Agmasari, 2019).

The regulation regarding the 10 Priority Tourism is known as the 10 New Bali program. The GGgovernment agreed to focus on accelerating the development of the

program, which began in November 2017 to boost tourism distribution in Indonesia. So it is hoped that this program can further improve the economic level of people around the tourist area (Agmasari, 2019). The ten priority tourist areas include Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara; Mandalika, West Nusa Tenggara; Lake Toba, North Sumatra; Morotai Island, North Maluku; Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi; Tanjung Kelayang, Bangka Belitung Islands; Borobudur, Central Java; Tanjung Lesung, Banten; Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, East Java and the Thousand Islands, DKI Jakarta (Putra, 2018).

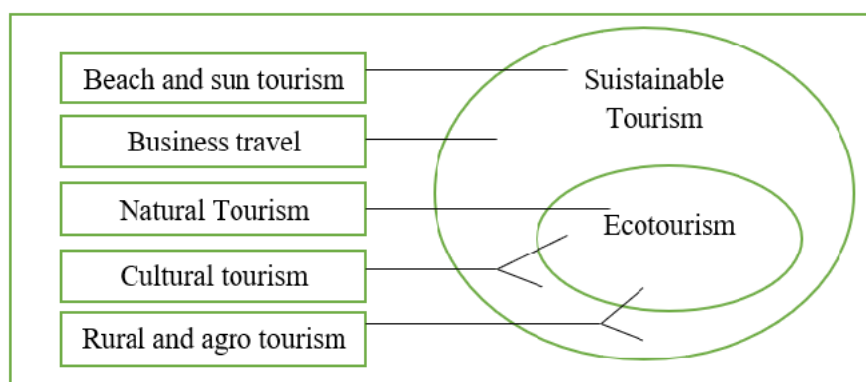
One of the areas that have become the focus of the government in developing ten priority tourism areas is Ranu Pani Village, located in Lumajang Regency, to be precise, within the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park Area. Ranu Pani is a village with an altitude of 2100 MASL which is included in one of the lists of the highest villages in Indonesia (Sushmita, 2022). Its location in the highlands makes Ranu Pani Village have cooler temperatures and beautiful mountainous landscapes. In addition, the majority of the population of this village are residents of the Tengger tribe, who are still closely related to their cultural heritage. So that not infrequently, tourists come to enjoy the natural scenery, atmosphere, and culture found in this area. Various efforts have been made by the Government and residents to increase tourist visits to Ranu Pani Village, some of which are by conducting marketing, increasing accessibility, building destinations, and improving the quality of tourism resources and institutions.

The dynamics of an increase in visits to an area certainly results in some positive impacts from an economic and socio-cultural perspective. According to Gee (Utama, 2017), the impacts viewed from the socio-cultural aspect include protection for objects that have historical value, such as historical buildings, ancient objects, traditional arts, dances, clothing, and traditional ceremonies. There is a renewal of community pride in being cultured, creating cultural exchanges from tourists with the local community so that tourists know the values contained in a local community tradition and vice versa. In addition, the development of tourism in an area has positive values, according to (Yoeti Oka A., 2008), including the process of transmitting employment opportunities from one sector to the service sector, income distribution, and increasing income through consumption and activities carried out by Tourists. Increased knowledge of local communities, such as changes in behavior in a more positive direction in terms of etiquette and communication.

However, the dynamics of tourism development in an area do not only have a positive impact. According to Gee in (Utama, 2017) this development also has a negative impact on the socio-culture of the local community including (1) Overcrowding and loss of amenities for residents; Every manager of a tourism object, of course, wants a lot of visits to tourist objects, but some things need to be taken into account so that it is not too crowded to avoid overcrowding which causes inconvenience to the local community. (2) Cultural Impacts; Because they want to accommodate all the wishes of tourists, it is not uncommon for tourism managers to commercialize their culture too much, so that they unknowingly reduce and change something that is unique to their customs or can even reduce the value of a culture that should be done solemnly. (3) Social problems; There is a negative cultural mix between tourists and the local community.

This is the basis for Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani to take several concrete steps, namely by inviting several stakeholders and establishing communication with the community

to create a sustainable tourism concept with a cultural basis. The presence of ecotourism is also considered capable of being an intermediary between conservation interests, cultural preservation, and economic interests (Karim et al., 2019). According to research conducted by Aryunda (2011), applying ecotourism can also increase people's income. Aryunda explained that people who have businesses in the tourism sector have experienced an increase in income of 79-100%. The same thing was conveyed by (Waylen et al., 2009); in this research, they revealed that ecotourism is one of the right steps in improving the community's economy without ignoring the principles of conservation and locality that exist in an area. Wood (2002) divides ecotourism into five parts based on the attractions presented. These sections are marine tourism (beach and sun tourism), rural tourism (rural and agro-tourism), nature tourism (natural tourism), cultural tourism (cultural tourism), and business travel (business travel).



If we follow the theory regarding ecotourism presented by Wood above, Ranu Pani Village is included in ecotourism that offers Natural tourism and Cultural Tourism. This, of course, cannot be realized properly if there are no local community efforts to develop strategies to develop the tourism potential to have a set of studies to realize a common goal, namely through destination branding efforts. Destination branding itself, according to Morgan & Pritchard, this theory explains that all elements of a brand or brand must describe all the key components of destination branding, including position, benefits (thoughts/logic), rational and emotional (feelings), and associations, along with the brand personality. Destination branding is a process used to develop a unique identity and personality distinct from all destinations. The purpose of branding is to choose a consistent mix of brand elements to identify and differentiate goals by building a positive image (Cai, 2002)

The theory of Destination branding in this study is an attempt to change a person's perception or view of a place or destination, including seeing the differences in a place to choose as a tourist destination. The brand architecture at its heart in the blueprint should guide brand building, development, and marketing, which are tools all destination branding marketers can use. Morgan & Pritchard (2004) suggests five stages for carrying out destination branding: Market investigation and strategic analysis, Brand identity development, Brand introduction, Brand implementation, and Monitoring and evaluation.

Methods

The approach used in this study is a constructivist approach using descriptive methods with a qualitative approach. The descriptive method is defined by Amiruddin (2016) as a

problem-solving procedure that is investigated by describing the state of the subject/object of research (a person, institution, community and others). This method is not limited to the collection and process of compiling data, but also includes analysis and interpretation of the data itself so that it will provide an adequate interpretation of the facts in the field. In selecting informants, researchers used a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique for data sources based on certain objectives or considerations beforehand (Yusuf, 2014). These particular considerations, for example, are people who are considered to know and master the theme to be studied, making it easier for researchers to explore the object or social situation to be studied. In this study, the method used to collect data is by observing, interviewing and documenting. The data analysis technique used in this study is the spiral model initiated by Creswell (2013), namely using the stages of organizing data, creating memos, classifying codes into a theme, developing assessing interpretations and presenting data.

Results and Discussion

This discussion leads researchers to a more in-depth discussion of the study's findings. The things that form the basis of communication studies within the scope of sustainable tourism studies produce patterns that vary according to the objects and subjects studied.

Sustainable tourism is based on the principles of sustainable development, namely development that focuses on the balance of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. Ecotourism is one of the tourism activities based on the principle of sustainable tourism. This activity is carried out in natural places to minimize negative impacts. It aims to generate economic benefits for the local area, providing Areaoyment for those around the Area and also cocreating to the preservation of nature and local culture. Many parties are involved in building and developing the Ecotourism Area in Ranu Pani Village. There needs to be well-organized efforts to create a good and effective communication climate between stakeholders. All parties involved in the development and development process must see from two sides. Not only the side that has economic value but also the side that considers environmental sustainability and the preservation of the customs of Ranu Pani Village.

Ranu Pani Village is within the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park area. Based on the division of its territory, this village is located in the west of Senduro District, part of Lumajang Regency. To get to this village, it can be reached through two routes, namely the first through the east route from the Senduro direction, the second from the north, namely through the Tumpang District, Malang Regency. The Tengger people inhabit the village of Ranu Pani, the majority of whom work as farmers. However, public awareness of the tourism potential has appeared. This is reflected in a friendly, warm, and open attitude towards tourists. In addition, many of the Ranu Pani community have started building homestays. The people of Ranu Pani are slowly realizing they cannot fully depend on the agricultural sector for their economy. Steep and narrow land contours are prone to causing erosion on hills, pollution, and sedimentation in lakes. In addition, the people of Ranu Pani Village are also aware that their customs and culture have the potential to become a tourist attraction.

Ranu Pani has several tourist attractions, such as beautiful scenery with mountainous landscapes, a cool atmosphere, and people known to be friendly and have a variety of unique cultures and customs. This gives Ranu Pani the potential to develop into a culture-based

tourism area. Therefore, Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani has prepared several efforts to increase regional income through tourism activities but still adheres to sustainability principles and preservation of local customs by implementing culture-based ecotourism.

To achieve the desired goal, namely the creation of sustainable tourism or ecotourism in Ranu Pani, it is necessary to have a set of effective and compatible indicators to support the entire program. In compiling these indicators, an analysis process is needed to facilitate explanation in the communication process, namely through the analysis of communication strategies, to facilitate planning and development by determining the necessary components and eliminating unnecessary components. One of the efforts is to analyze the destination branding in Ranu Pani Village. Prebensen (2007) explains that an important step in creating a strong and integrated destination brand is to gain cooperation and collaboration from various stakeholder groups.

Understanding the relationships between these stakeholder groups and the value each contributes to the brand will assist in creating and reaching an agreement on branding strategies (Wong et al., 2018). Together with visitors, the local community and business owners are the main components of a brand.

Implementation of destination branding to improve culture-based tourism carried out by Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani consists of market investigation & strategic analysis, brand identity development, brand introduction, brand implementation, and monitoring evaluation to increase visits. However, apart from looking at it from an economic perspective, Pokdarwis also made efforts to increase community participation in the sustainability of ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village through interpersonal communication processes and risk communication with the local people of Ranu Pani Village. The destination branding efforts carried out by Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani are:

1. Market Investigation & Strategic Analysis; This stage is carried out by mapping market potential, analyzing what things can be developed, and developing the right strategy to develop a tourism destination. In carrying out this stage, Pokdarwis Edelwais synergizes with several parties in carrying out its mission, namely, working with the government in mapping, analyzing strategies, and increasing the human resource capacity of the Ranu Pani Community. The role of government in development activity is very important. Bearing in mind the government is the highest institution in an area with the authority and ability to formulate and implement development policies. According to Tjokroaminoto in Listyaningsih (2014), the government has a role as a development agent or agent in a development which has a role as formulator, executor, and controller. In addition, the government also has a role in the development of an area through the provision of infrastructure and community capacity building through training related to the development of an area.

In this case, the government that plays a role in developing ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village includes the Village Government, Regional Government, and the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, which is under the authority of the Ministry of Forestry and Environment (KLHK). In the last three years, the government of Lumajang Regency, through the Tourism and Culture Office, has carried out several infrastructure developments in Ranu Pani Village to support ecotourism activities in Ranu Pani Village. In addition, to increase the capacity and readiness of the community to manage tourism,

the government also conducts various training related to tourism, such as training for tour guides, training for MSME products, training for homestay management, etc. The process of selecting local champions by the Tourism Office is carried out by analyzing the backgrounds of Pokdarwis members so that they are expected to become representatives and intermediaries between the government and the community. At this stage, the government and Pokdarwis conduct market potential mapping activities, develop strategies and identify visitor needs such as attractions, accessibility, and amenities. In addition, Pokdarwis also collaborates with NGOs in developing strategies. To achieve the stated goals, collaboration is one of the most effective ways in the ecotourism development process. In the planning process, Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani collaborated with one of the NGOs in East Java, namely EJEJF (East Java Ecotourism Forum). This collaboration resulted in several plans, such as designing programs and attractions within the scope of ecotourism activities. The results of this collaboration are in the form of outbound attractions and agro-tourism, managed directly by the local Ranu Pani community.

2. Brand identity development; The brand identity development stage is carried out after the investigative process. Developing this brand identity is carried out in various ways, including creating a tagline and logo that represents Ranu Pani Village as a tangible asset. At this stage, Pokdarwis also develops a regional identity with intangible characteristics. This is introduced to the public as a representation of Ranu Pani Village through efforts to create local branding. This effort was made to provide a choice of tourist destinations to be visited by tourists. While building and developing ecotourism in Ranupani Village, Pokdarwis Edelwais uses local branding as one of its strategies. Local branding is carried out by creating a tourism concept based on culture. This can be known through the efforts made by Pokdarwis, such as making tangible assets such as the ecotourism logo and the slogan "Atmosphere is like in your hometown." The slogan was made with the aim that tourists who come also feel that they belong to Ranu Pani Village as a home that must be maintained and preserved. This slogan is also interpreted as the openness and friendliness of the people of Ranu Pani to newcomers. So that tourists will get comfort in traveling like in their hometown. The Ranu Pani Ecotourism logo depicts the concept of Trihitakarana, a value shared by the Tengger Tribe community, especially the Ranu Pani Village Community. Tri Hita Karana is a basis for obtaining the happiness of life if you can have a harmonious relationship with God in the form of (sincere) devotion to fellow human beings in the form of devotion and to the natural environment in the form of loving nature conservation.



As for the management of intangible assets in the form of customary assets that are owned, such as the culture of Njagong, Gegeni, and Pokdarwis guests, develop them into a cultural ecotourism attraction, namely by introducing the Tengger Tribe people's way of dressing to tourists who come as an embodiment of one of the meanings of the Trihitakarana concept.



Source: researcher documentation



In addition, Pokdarwis cooperates with the government as a key actor who has full power over a policy in developing brand identity. The cooperation is in the form of technical training such as tourism guide training, outbound guide training, craft production training for souvenirs, and homestay management training. This process is carried out to improve the quality of the attractions and amenities in Ranu Pani Village, which will further enhance the brand identity of Ranu Pani Ecotourism.

3. **Brand Introduction;** The brand introduction is a strategy for determining to whom and through what media the brand communication is addressed. Tools are needed for brand communication to expedite the activity of introducing a tourist attraction to the wider community as potential consumers. Pokdarwis makes several efforts to introduce a brand, including communicating the brand through various media, both online and offline, and through an event. Some of the efforts made by Pokdarwis Ranu Pani are the use of social

media. To reach a wider audience coverage, Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu pani used social media for marketing. The social media used are Instagram and Facebook. Social media itself is defined as a container containing information used by someone to convey messages. The nature of social media, which is easy to access and has various features in its use, has a positive influence during interaction with others and the general public for marketing purposes (Nasrullah in Aliyah, 2017: 26).

The marketing process of cultural-based ecotourism destinations in Ranu Pani Village is important in providing information for tourists regarding their destinations. Besides being useful for introducing tourism potential to the general public, the use of social media can, of course, influence the general public's interest in visiting through certain marketing techniques. This is, of course, influenced by the development of information technology and the rapid development of digital technology, which creates new methods and techniques in marketing (Dwyer, 2018, p. 29-48, Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 8-10). Messages conveyed via social media @ranupani_indonesia promote tourist destinations and people's daily lives, update information about Ranu Pani, and depict Ranu Pani Village as a rural tourist spot offering green, peaceful, and warmth. In addition, the @ranupani_indonesia account often markets UMKM products produced by the local Ranu Pani community, such as Dutch eggplant jam, processed chili sauce, and processed potatoes, the main commodities in Ranu Pani Village. Not only used for marketing purposes, but the @ranupani_indonesia account also often uploads messages related to environmental sustainability through posters, photos, and videos. In addition, promotions that are considered effective are in the form of hashtags and mentions from tourists, so this will increase the engagement of the @ranupani_indonesia account. In carrying out destination branding, it is necessary to formulate a strategy, namely internal and external relations, to convey an effective and broad message to an organization (Maulana & Afifi, 2021); one example of external relations is establishing cooperation with the media. In its efforts to broaden the ecotourism spotlight in Ranu Pani Village, Pokdarwis Edelweiss has also taken several steps by collaborating with the media. As stated by Kotler (2002), in selecting media, one must consider the advantages and disadvantages of each medium. Pokdarwis assesses that national-scale television media certainly has a wider reach. Therefore, Pokdarwis often collaborates with national media such as trans7. The content in the coverage contains natural beauty, social culture, culinary potential, and characteristics of the Ranu Pani Community. This step aims to introduce the tourism potential of Ranu Pani Village to a wide audience.

Additionally, Pokdarwis Ranu Pani cooperates with local online media lumajangsatu.com to promote cultural activities and events in Ranu Pani Village. This, of course, will boost the tourism exposure of Ranu Pani among the local people of Lumajang and outside Lumajang.

4. Brand Implementation; Implementing a brand is an effort to integrate all stakeholders involved in brand formation so the destination brand efforts can succeed. A brand can also be interpreted explicitly as a provider's promise to its consumers. Thus, the brand implementation stage is a step in realizing the promise of service providers to consumers. As one of the efforts to attract people to come to Ranu Pani Village, it is necessary to have

a tourism image. The government's image development includes constructing a rest area aimed at attracting tourists passing through the Lumajang-Malang route to stop and rest on the shores of Lake Ranu Pani. In addition, the government is also building an amphitheater tourist attraction to accommodate cultural activities often held in Ranu Pani Village. The government also carries out the construction of traditional houses, aiming to introduce the culture that belongs to Ranu Pani Village to outsiders. One of the main points that need to be considered in a tourism activity is the existence of good amenities. The development of various amenities by the government is carried out to provide a sense of comfort to visitors. Infrastructure development was carried out in Ranu Pani, such as the construction of homestays with national standard facilities, the construction of pedestrians to facilitate pedestrians in Ranu Pani Village, the construction of culverts to minimize the impact of flooding in Ranu Pani Village, etc.



Source: researcher documentation

5. **Monitoring & Evaluation;** Supervision and evaluation is the last process of a managerial activity. According to Widjaya (1987), supervision is defined as a performance calculation carried out to meet the planned targets—a monitoring and evaluation function to find out whether an organization's goals are achieved. The process of analysis of the causes accompanied her. In addition, monitoring and evaluation are used as controllers, monitoring the effectiveness of the planning and organizing carried out. Evaluation in the ecotourism management process is very important to ensure that the activities carried out are by the principles and processes previously designed.

The supervision and evaluation process carried out by the Pokdarwis is limited to the supervision and evaluation of each division. This has caused several programs to not run smoothly due to the lack of holistic supervision and lack of a thorough evaluation by all Pokdarwis members. This is a big homework for the management, not only the core but also the entire Pokdarwis members, to carry out monitoring and evaluation in a structured and efficient manner in the future.

One of the stakeholders in a tourist area is the community in the area itself. Bearing that the community is the main actors and beneficiaries of tourism activities, they must be active in every program initiated or implemented. This is so, according to Weaver & Lawton (2001), because public perception is an important input in planning and managing programs

so managers can maximize ecotourism's benefits. The positive impact received by the community will then be able to raise their awareness about the importance of ecotourism or sustainable tourism. Muresan et al. (2016). In line with what was explained by Lawton & Weaver, Sirivongs & Tsuchiya (2012), it was also stated that positive attitudes and behavior of the community towards tourism have contributed greatly to realizing sustainable biodiversity conservation in the Phou Khao Khouay Nature Protection Area, Central Laos. By realizing the potential of the surrounding biodiversity, it can provide economic and social benefits to the community around the Protected Area. This is the background for Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani to make efforts for outside communities and local communities. The approach taken is by conducting risk communication. Risk communication is one of the strategies undertaken in developing tourism in Ranu Pani Village. Risk communication is the exchange of information carried out in real-time, which contains suggestions and opinions from experts, the public, and the government relating to certain issues to minimize the risks that may occur. Risk communication has the goal that the public pays more attention to the impact of damage and cultural blurring that might occur (Yudarwati et al., 2021). Apart from aiming to increase public awareness of damage, risk communication also functions as a preventive measure to minimize losses that will occur by preparing structured regulations before and during an incident. In carrying out risk communication, do not only emphasize strategies. However, it is necessary to identify potential crises and analyze the negative impact of damage by carrying out central strengthening (Coombs & Holladay, 2010).

Therefore, Pokdarwis and TNBTS carry out risk communication to the people of Ranu Pani Village regarding the worst risks that will be experienced by Ranu Pani if there is no serious handling related to tourism management, preservation of customs, agriculture, and the environment in Ranu Pani Village. This is done so that the community has an idea of all the possibilities that will occur, so it is hoped that awareness will arise in the community to manage tourism and the environment in Ranu Pani Village wisely. Risk communication is carried out informally to the community through the 'njagong' activity by TNBTS extension officers and Edelweiss Ranu Pani Pokdarwis members.

The next effort made by Pokdarwis Edelwais Ranu Pani is to conduct interpersonal communication with the community. Communicating is a process of delivering messages to recipients that aim to create an interaction to get agreement in deciding a problem and achieving the desired goals. An expert stated that communication is very important in an action change to get maximum results, and there are no obstacles in conveying the message itself (Fahme, 2011). Pokdarwis Edelwais also carried this out as one of the efforts to develop culture-based ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village. This effort was carried out through an interpersonal communication approach with the people of Ranu Pani Village. Interpersonal communication is carried out using 'njagong' or gathering in an informal forum with a small scope. The message content is about tourism development, damage prevention, disaster management, cultural preservation, and the environment. This step was taken so that the delivery of messages to the public was effective and efficient. In addition, Pokdarwis also invites the public to participate directly as tourism service providers to provide an economical alternative to farming.

Conclusion

The interweaving of cultural tourism and destination branding, as demonstrated by Ranu Pani, is an attractive model for leveraging a destination's cultural assets. In the process of developing ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village, Pokdarwis Edelwais took several steps, namely through implementing destination branding as an effort to increase tourism, including through the process of market investigation & strategic analysis, brand identity development, brand introduction, brand implementation, and also monitoring evaluation to increase visits. However, apart from an economic perspective, to increase visits, Pokdarwis also carried out a communication strategy to increase community participation in the sustainability of ecotourism in Ranu Pani Village through interpersonal communication processes and risk communication to the local Ranu Pani Village community, which was carried out through informal forums.

Ecotourism development and destination branding efforts in Ranu Pani Village through Pokdarwis Edelwais have succeeded in creating a good synergy between natural tourism, culture, and the local community so that lessons can be learned from Ranu Pani, destinations around the world can aspire to preserve their cultural heritage and left an indelible mark on the world of cultural tourism and branding.

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