SCIENTIFIC PAPER

From Terrain to Classroom: Harnessing Ecotourism Situ Gede for Enhanced Geographic Learning

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ABSTRACT
In the realm of regional development, tourism emerges as a vital catalyst, promoting economic growth and employment. This study scrutinizes Tasikmalaya City in West Java, spotlighting Situ Gede, a natural area poised for ecotourism. Managed by the regional culture and tourism office, Situ Gede harmonizes cultural and natural tourism, featuring traditions, pilgrimage, and events. The research aims to dissect ecotourism development in Situ Gede, aligning the analysis with geographic education paradigms. It identifies a confluence of cultural and natural tourism, emphasizing the need for collaborative infrastructure enhancement between government and community. Utilizing a qualitative, descriptive approach, the study gleans data from interviews, field observations, and literature. It engages with visitors, vendors, and managers, revealing Situ Gede's ecotourism potential and advocating for integrated development efforts. This inquiry not only enriches geographical understanding of regional tourism but also guides sustainable ecotourism practices, offering insights for policymakers and educators.

KEYWORDS
Tourism, Ecotourism, Tourism Development

INTRODUCTION
Edutourism, a fusion of education and tourism, represents an innovative approach to learning where travelers engage with the destination's geographical, cultural, and historical aspects. This intersection is particularly resonant with geographic education, which seeks to deepen understanding of Earth's landscapes, peoples, and environments. The potential of edutourism to enhance geographic education is profound, offering immersive, real-world experiences that transcend traditional classroom boundaries.

Geographic education fundamentally aims to cultivate an informed understanding of place and space, cultural landscapes, and the interactions between humans and their environments. Edutourism serves as a dynamic...
From Terrain to Classroom platform to actualize these objectives, facilitating experiential learning where participants actively engage with the geographical elements of their destination. Through edutourism, learners can explore diverse ecosystems, understand cultural intricacies, and witness the tangible outcomes of human-environment interactions, thereby gaining a deeper, more nuanced understanding of geographical concepts.

In the context of ecotourism, for instance, visitors not only appreciate the beauty of natural landscapes but also learn about local conservation efforts, biodiversity, and sustainable practices. This experiential learning resonates with geographic education's emphasis on environmental stewardship and sustainability. By experiencing these concepts firsthand, travelers develop a more profound respect and understanding for the complexity of environmental issues and the importance of sustainable living.

Moreover, edutourism's focus on cultural immersion allows learners to experience the geographical concept of place. They understand how history, culture, and environment shape the identity and characteristics of a region. This direct engagement promotes a deeper appreciation and respect for cultural diversity and fosters global awareness.

Incorporating edutourism into geographic education not only enhances the learning experience but also encourages responsible and informed citizenship. It nurtures critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills by exposing learners to real-world challenges and diverse perspectives. As such, edutourism stands as a vital tool in geographic education, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate and contribute positively to an increasingly interconnected world.

The development of ecotourism according to (Maryani, 2019) must adhere to 3 main concepts, namely:

**Ecology-Based Ecotourism**

Ecotourism with an ecological basis is an alternative concept in an effort to develop an area into a tourist destination but still pay attention to environmental conservation by using the potential of physical and cultural resources of the local community. The development of ecotourism is not only aimed at generating economic benefits, but also its development must pay attention to maintaining the ecological and social quality of the community. This concept is often referred to as the concept of sustainable development. Ecotourism as a concept of sustainable and environmentally sound tourism has different characteristics from other tourism, where ecotourism is responsible for environmental conservation, plays a role in local community economic empowerment efforts, and respects existing community culture. This ecotourism will have a wide multiplier effect, especially in efforts to maintain environmental conditions and improve the economy of local communities.

**Ecotourism Area Suitability Concept**

This concept is a concept that is concerned with regional mapping planning on the grounds that the existence of a tourist area has a close relationship with land use which is an important element in regional planning. The use of an area as an ecotourism area will affect ecological and social changes in the local community. Therefore, in the development of conservation areas that are converted into tourist areas, it is necessary to pay attention and consider related
tourism areas that should not cause disruption of the function of conservation areas due to utilization that is not in accordance with the area.

**Concept of Area Support Capacity**

The concept of area carrying capacity emphasizes the size of the maximum limit of use of an area based on tolerance influenced by various natural factors, such as the availability of natural resources, space for living, and areas for water availability. This concept is an indicator in managing human activities and the availability of supporting land so that conditions that exceed capacity do not occur, because the impact can cause human discomfort and damage to environmental resources. The carrying capacity of the area with this concept will basically provide an assessment of an area in providing space for utilization without reducing the ability of the area to provide environmental services.

Low Choy and Heilbronn (1996) identify five pivotal constraints that underpin ecotourism, each playing a critical role in shaping its efficacy and sustainability. Firstly, the environment serves as the foundational element of ecotourism, necessitating that it emanates from an unspoiled setting that relies on and celebrates the intrinsic value of the natural and cultural landscape, remaining untainted by external influences. Secondly, the community aspect stresses that ecotourism must confer direct ecological, social, and economic benefits to local populations, thereby fostering a symbiotic relationship between the visitors and the host community. Thirdly, education and experience are vital, with ecotourism obligated to enhance tourists' understanding of and appreciation for the natural environment and ecological culture, fundamentally through the experiences garnered during their visit. Fourthly, sustainability is paramount; ecotourism endeavors must contribute positively to the ecological environment's longevity, ideally with a long-term perspective in mind. Finally, management is a crucial factor, requiring that ecotourism operations be conducted in an environmentally and culturally sustainable manner, aimed at improving the welfare of the community both now and into the future. Collectively, these constraints form the bedrock of responsible and effective ecotourism practices.

Situ Gede, characterized by its expansive natural lake and distinctive central island, epitomizes the potential of edutourism to substantially augment geographic education. Situated within the Mangkubumi District of Tasikmalaya City, this locale transcends mere geographic coordinates, emerging as a vibrant educational milieu offering a plethora of learning opportunities. The lake's strategic geographical position, flanked by varied land utilizations and settlements, furnishes a comprehensive backdrop for elucidating the dynamics of human-environment interactions, a cornerstone concept within the domain of geographic education.

The substantial utility of the area as an agricultural water reservoir accentuates the criticality of sustainable resource management, an integral theme in geographic curricula. As learners, be they students or tourists, traverse Situ Gede, they are afforded the opportunity to investigate themes of sustainability, ecology, and hydrogeography. Such exploration facilitates a direct encounter with the role of aqueous bodies within both natural ecosystems and human economies. This immersive experience effectively transmutes abstract geographical concepts into palpable realities, thereby amplifying the understanding and appreciation of the discipline among learners.

Nonetheless, the current underexploitation of Situ Gede's ecotourism capabilities presents an invaluable educational prospect. Through participation in
an analytical study aimed at the development of the area into a flourishing ecotourism enclave, learners are invited to engage in applied geography. This involves a critical examination of ecological, economic, and social conditions, interfacing with topics such as regional planning, environmental conservation, and community development. This endeavor not only deepens geographical acumen but also cultivates critical thinking and problem-solving competencies, as learners contemplate the equilibrium between conservation, tourism, and local community requisites.

Incorporating Situ Gede within the framework of geographic education through the lens of edutourism facilitates a comprehensive, interdisciplinary learning experience. It propels learners to amalgamate theoretical knowledge with practical, real-world applications, thereby equipping them to evolve into informed, conscientious citizens poised to make decisions that yield positive global ramifications. Consequently, Situ Gede stands as a testament to the profound capacity of edutourism to enrich geographic education, transforming natural landscapes into dynamic educational arenas and fostering a more profound and engaged comprehension of our world.

**METHOD**

In this study, we employ a nuanced and rigorous qualitative descriptive methodology, recognized for its capacity to yield in-depth insights into complex phenomena. This approach is particularly well-suited to the exploratory nature of our research, which aims to intricately understand and articulate the multifaceted dynamics of the Situ Gede tourism area, with the specific objective of identifying the potential of edutourism as a material object in geographic education. Qualitative descriptive research, as delineated by Sudjana and Ibrahim (1989), is instrumental in providing a rich, detailed account of current conditions or phenomena without engaging in quantitative measurement. This method is particularly adept at capturing the nuanced complexities inherent in human experiences and social contexts, making it an ideal fit for this study's focus on human-geographic interactions and perceptions.

Data collection is a cornerstone of this methodology, and our strategy is comprehensive and multi-dimensional. Primary data is gathered through semi-structured interviews with a carefully selected sample of participants, including visitors, local traders, and managers of the Situ Gede tourist area. These interviews are designed to elicit detailed, subjective accounts of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes related to the tourism dynamics in Situ Gede. Complementing these interviews, field notes and observational data provide additional layers of context, capturing the subtleties of the setting and interactions that occur within it.

Furthermore, we engage in a thorough review of relevant literature, encompassing both academic studies and grey literature, to ground our research in a robust theoretical framework and contextual understanding. This triangulation of data sources – interviews, observations, and literature – ensures a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of the subject matter.

In analyzing the qualitative data, we adopt a thematic analysis approach, systematically coding and categorizing the data to identify key themes, patterns, and insights. This analysis is both inductive and iterative, allowing for the emergence of unexpected findings and the continuous refinement of our understanding as the study progresses. The ultimate aim is to produce a rich,
detailed, and nuanced portrayal of the Situ Gede tourism area, providing valuable insights that can inform future research, policy, and practice in geographic education and sustainable tourism development, with a particular focus on leveraging edutourism as a dynamic tool for geographic learning.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The potential of tourism as a developmental catalyst in a region is a subject of considerable interest. The inherent tourism potential of an area is a critical component in the cultivation of tourist attractions and new resources, capable of drawing visitors and enhancing the area's profile. In the context of Situ Gede, an area earmarked for ecotourism, a comprehensive analysis reveals both strengths and areas for improvement.

Situ Gede is actively developed by local authorities, leveraging its unique natural and cultural tourism potential. This includes customs, pilgrimage tours, and various events, all contributing to its allure as an ecotourism destination. The availability of diverse souvenirs and the organization of varied tourism events enhance the visitor experience. Crucially, the community's participatory approach and art performances not only augment the area's attractiveness but also foster a socially conducive environment for tourism growth. These elements, when harnessed effectively, can serve as dynamic tools for geographic learning, offering insights into the region's cultural and natural heritage, and demonstrating sustainable tourism practices.

Disadvantages of Situ Gede Tourism: The area faces challenges, notably in the management of facilities and infrastructure. Poor maintenance impacts the potential and longevity of these resources. Additionally, suboptimal accessibility due to inadequate road networks and limited public transportation hinders visitor access. Promotion of the area's attractions is also insufficient, failing to maximize its visibility and appeal. Furthermore, the limited quantity and quality of tourism human resources pose a constraint on service and development.

To extend the discussion and enhance the academic rigor, it's essential to consider the potential and attractions of Situ Gede as a subject for sustainable geographic education. The area's natural landscape, cultural practices, and ongoing development efforts provide a living laboratory for examining key geographic concepts such as sustainable resource management, cultural preservation, and the socio-economic impacts of tourism. By engaging with Situ Gede, learners can critically analyze the interplay between human activity and the environment, explore strategies for sustainable tourism, and contemplate the role of community engagement in preserving cultural and natural heritage. This exploration not only enriches geographic understanding but also cultivates a sense of stewardship and responsibility among learners, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to sustainable development efforts in their own communities and beyond.

Aspects of Potential Development of Situ Gede as Ecotourism

The proposed development of Situ Gede into an ecotourism nexus represents a strategic amalgamation of activities that are not merely recreational but are intrinsically aligned with the tenets of geographic education and sustainable development. Trekking, a pivotal activity within this framework, leverages the area's distinctive lowland terrain and picturesque lake vistas to provide an immersive ecological and geological educational experience. This
engagement, particularly in the tranquility of dawn, cultivates an intimate rapport between individuals and the natural landscape, thereby enhancing comprehension and fostering a profound appreciation of the natural milieu.

Complementary to this, the camping initiative in Situ Gede's diverse topography offers an experiential learning platform where participants actively engage with the environment. This interaction facilitates an understanding of sustainable living principles while providing a hands-on approach to studying geographical features and ecological interactions in situ.

Innovatively, the 'Duck Goes Game' introduces visitors to the lake's aquatic ecosystem, serving not merely as a recreational activity but as an educative tool accentuating themes of water conservation and biodiversity. Parallel to this, the water boat tours to the island at the lake's nucleus not only proffer a family-friendly recreational pursuit but also act as a conduit for comprehensive geographical exploration. These tours offer invaluable insights into limnology, aquatic biodiversity, and the cultural lore of the lake and its environs. These carefully curated activities, when strategically developed and judiciously managed, have the potential to metamorphose Situ Gede into a vibrant educational landscape. Each facet is designed to contribute to a holistic understanding of geography, ecology, and sustainability principles.

Integrating these multifarious activities into Situ Gede's ecotourism strategy is anticipated not only to diversify its appeal but also to foster responsible tourism practices and underscore the importance of environmental stewardship. This paradigm exemplifies the potential of ecotourism to function as an interactive, pragmatic tool for geographic education, prompting visitors to transition from passive observers to active participants in conservation initiatives. Consequently, Situ Gede is poised to evolve into an exemplar of sustainable tourism development, embodying the symbiotic relationship between leisure, education, and environmental custodianship. Such a transformation will underscore Situ Gede's commitment to fostering a nuanced, engaged understanding of our world, in line with the highest academic and scientific standards.

This investigation elucidates the multifaceted potential of Situ Gede as a hub for sustainable geographic education and tourism, emphasizing its role in fostering environmental stewardship and cultural understanding. The area, renowned for its serene beauty and varied topography, offers an ideal landscape for diverse activities aligned with educational and recreational objectives. Outbound activities, such as flying fox adventures, provide an interactive platform for visitors to engage physically with the environment, enhancing their appreciation for the natural world while promoting physical well-being. Photography and sightseeing facilitate a deeper connection with the landscape, encouraging visitors to observe and document the intricate details of the natural and cultural milieu, thus fostering an appreciation of geographical aesthetics and diversity.

Picnicking and cultural interactions within Situ Gede offer immersive experiences that blend leisure with learning, allowing visitors to savor the local culinary delights while appreciating the scenic beauty, thereby promoting an understanding of the region's cultural geography. Furthermore, the area's potential as an environmental education resource is particularly significant. Targeted at students and researchers, Situ Gede serves as a living classroom where individuals can study the history and ecology of the lake, engage in hands-on environmental management practices, and conduct field research, thereby fostering a sustainable approach to geographic education.
The sustainability of Situ Gede as a geographic education resource is anchored in its ability to offer continuous learning experiences that are both informative and transformative. By integrating educational content with recreational activities, Situ Gede can cultivate a deep-seated appreciation for the environment and cultural heritage among visitors, thereby encouraging sustainable practices and responsible tourism. The development and management of Situ Gede must, therefore, be approached with a commitment to preserving its natural and cultural integrity, ensuring that it continues to serve as a valuable resource for sustainable geographic education and an exemplar of eco-friendly tourism practices.

The potential of Situ Gede as an ecotourism destination is intrinsically linked to the principles of sustainable geographic education, emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach that integrates environment, community, education, sustainability, and management. Environmentally, Situ Gede's natural and cultural landscapes offer a real-world context for exploring geographic concepts such as ecosystems, biodiversity, and cultural heritage, making it an invaluable educational resource. The community aspect reinforces the geographic principle of human-environment interaction, demonstrating how local populations engage with and derive sustenance from their surroundings. This not only provides a practical understanding of economic geography but also underscores the importance of sustainable practices that benefit both people and the environment.

Educationally, Situ Gede is a living laboratory for experiential learning. It allows students and visitors to observe, interact with, and study the natural and cultural environment firsthand, fostering a deeper understanding of geographic concepts and environmental stewardship. This immersive learning experience is essential in cultivating informed, responsible citizens who appreciate the complexities of the world and their role in it.

Sustainability and management are central to both ecotourism and sustainable geographic education. Situ Gede's approach to these principles can serve as a case study for understanding the challenges and strategies involved in maintaining ecological balance, cultural integrity, and economic viability. Lessons learned here can inform broader discussions on sustainable development, conservation, and resource management within the geographic curriculum.

Incorporating Situ Gede into sustainable geographic education means moving beyond textbook learning to engage with real-world issues and solutions. It means preparing students not just to understand geographic principles but to apply them in ways that promote long-term sustainability and community well-being. As such, Situ Gede is more than just a destination; it's a dynamic educational tool that embodies the principles of sustainable geographic education and offers a pathway to a more informed and sustainable future.

**Strategies and Challenges in the Development of Situ Gede Ecotourism Area**

The development strategies and challenges of Situ Gede as an ecotourism area are deeply interconnected with the evolving needs of 21st-century geographic education, which increasingly emphasizes outdoor and contextual learning. The establishment of thematic development zones within Situ Gede aligns with the pedagogical shift towards providing students with real-world, context-rich learning environments. These zones offer a platform for immersive geographical learning, where concepts taught in the classroom can be observed, experienced, and analyzed in their natural context. This not only enhances the understanding and retention of geographical knowledge but also fosters a deeper
appreciation for the complexities and interdependencies of natural and cultural landscapes.

The strategy of connecting various tourist activity spaces and clarifying destination paths is also conducive to facilitating structured outdoor learning experiences. Well-planned infrastructure ensures that learners can navigate the area safely and effectively, focusing their attention on observing and understanding the geographical phenomena around them. By providing clear boundaries and designated areas for specific functions, educators and students can engage in targeted, meaningful learning activities without causing disruption to the environment or local communities.

However, integrating Situ Gede into 21st-century geographic education presents challenges. Balancing the quality and quantity of tourism and educational activities requires careful management to avoid overuse and degradation of the natural environment, which could diminish its value as an educational resource. Moreover, ensuring that developments are harmonized with community needs and local culture is essential to maintain the authenticity and contextual relevance of the learning experiences offered. The challenge of sustainable tourism development in Situ Gede reflects the broader challenge of 21st-century geography education: to provide students with authentic, engaging learning experiences that promote sustainability and cultural understanding.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach that involves educators, local communities, environmental experts, and tourism professionals. Together, they can develop strategies and practices that maximize the educational potential of Situ Gede while preserving its environmental and cultural integrity. By doing so, Situ Gede can become not just a tourist destination, but a living classroom that offers valuable lessons on the importance of sustainability, cultural respect, and environmental stewardship — key tenets of 21st-century geography education.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of this research underscores that Situ Gede harbors considerable potential for ecotourism development, characterized by its natural environment, cultural richness, community benefits, educational opportunities, and sustainable management. Notably, the area's intrinsic natural and cultural elements offer a foundation for diverse ecotourism activities, while the economic and agricultural benefits to the local community, potential for cultural tourism, and contributions to ecological sustainability bolster this potential. However, the study identifies significant limitations, particularly in environmental management, such as inadequate waste disposal mechanisms leading to littering, which undermines both ecological integrity and visitor experience.

In light of these findings, a comprehensive approach is recommended to maximize Situ Gede's ecotourism prospects. First, enhancing environmental management is crucial; this includes implementing effective waste management strategies, visitor education campaigns, and promoting recycling efforts to preserve the area's natural allure. Second, actively engaging the local community through capacity-building initiatives ensures they are primary beneficiaries and custodians of the ecotourism sector. Third, infrastructure should be improved to support ecotourism sustainably, with clear signage, visitor centers, and pathways that accommodate tourists while prioritizing conservation. Fourth, integrating educational programming can significantly enrich the visitor experience, aligning
with 21st-century geographic education by offering immersive learning about the area's environmental, cultural, and historical aspects. Finally, adopting and enforcing sustainable practices and policies will safeguard Situ Gede's natural and cultural resources, ensuring its viability and appeal as an ecotourism destination for generations to come. By addressing these challenges and embracing these strategies, Situ Gede can fully realize its potential, offering a model for sustainable, educational, and culturally enriching tourism.

REFERENCES


Authors

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Desti, another dedicated student in the same program, shares a passion for exploring the intricate patterns of the earth's surface and human societies. Her enrollment in the Geography Education undergraduate program at Universitas Siliwangi reflects her commitment to contributing to geographical learning and teaching. Desti's academic pursuits are supported by a vibrant educational environment that encourages exploration and innovation (email destl.d@gmail.com).

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Aura Yuga's involvement in the Geography Education program at Universitas Siliwangi highlights her dedication to understanding and teaching about the earth's systems and human impacts. Her academic path is defined by a commitment to exploring and addressing the challenges facing our world. Aura's engagement with geography is a testament to her passion for education and her ambition to inspire others (email aurayuga14@gmail.com).

Anita Eka Putri stands as a guiding figure in this academic community. As a lecturer in Geography Education at Universitas Siliwangi, she plays a pivotal role in shaping the minds of future geographers. Anita's expertise and dedication to teaching are instrumental in fostering a learning environment where students like Elsa, Desti, Anggraini, Aflahatin, and Aura can thrive and grow. Her contributions to the department and her students are invaluable, as she continues to inspire and educate the next generation of geographic thinkers and educators (email anita.eka@unsil.ac.id).