MIKAILALSYS
Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences

e-ISSN : 2987-2286
p-ISSN : 2987-3924

Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney, Copernicus, Sinta 4, Scilit, Semantic, Google, etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/mikailalsys.v4i3.11379

From Tokenism to Partnership: Community Participation in Managing Batu Dua Paragliding Sport Tourism, Indonesia

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Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Jun 9, 2026	Jul 7, 2026	Jul 19, 2026	Jul 24, 2026

Abstract

Batu Dua is a rural paragliding destination in Linggajaya Village, Sumedang Regency, Indonesia, where international event visibility contrasts with unresolved questions concerning community influence over destination decision-making. This study aimed to evaluate the forms of community participation in destination management and identify the highest level of authority demonstrated in practice. A qualitative single-case study design was employed, combining semi-structured interviews with four role-based informants, field observations, and document analysis. Interview data were coded using Arnstein's eight-rung Ladder of Citizen Participation and validated through source and method triangulation. Informant corroboration percentages were calculated descriptively by dividing the number of informants providing evidence for each rung by four and were not interpreted as population estimates. The findings reveal a hybrid participation profile. All informants reported government-led information provision, capacity-building activities, and operational collaboration; three reported two-way communication and consultation; two provided evidence of placation through community representation; and none reported delegated power or citizen control.

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Community members participated in parking management, food and beverage services, promotion, event support, and facility maintenance, while strategic decision-making authority remained concentrated among formal destination managers and government actors. Partnership therefore constituted the highest observed level of participation, although it did not represent comprehensive citizen power. The study concludes that community involvement at Batu Dua remains primarily operational rather than authority-based. These findings extend understanding of participation in rural sport tourism governance and indicate that progression toward formal co-management requires explicit decision-making rights, transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms, accountable community representation, and participatory monitoring.

Keywords: Arnstein's Ladder; Citizen Participation; Community-Based Tourism; Destination Governance; Sport Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Sport tourism can connect mobility, competition, destination branding, and local enterprise, but its development value depends on how benefits and authority are distributed in the host destination (UN Tourism, 2023). Batu Dua Paragliding Flying Site lies on the slope of Mount Lingga in Linggajaya Village, Cisitu District, Sumedang Regency. An official provincial record identifies the site as the launch venue for the 2025 West Java Paragliding Championship, which involved 120 athletes from 18 countries (Bappeda Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2025). This visibility confirms Batu Dua's strategic importance within Sumedang's sport-tourism portfolio, consistent with a recent evaluation of local sport-tourism policy (Fauzi et al., 2025) and evidence that sustainable sport destinations require governance that connects events, heritage, environment, and community value (Rangkuti et al., 2025).

International exposure, however, does not by itself demonstrate inclusive management. Sport-tourism research shows that community relations and perceived benefits shape residents' supportive behavior (Ma et al., 2023), while collaboration studies identify coordination, shared resources, and durable stakeholder relationships as recurring conditions for destination performance (Mollah et al., 2021). Environmental reviews similarly caution that sport-tourism growth must be matched by locally grounded stewardship and impact management (Mascarenhas et al., 2021). The central issue at Batu Dua is therefore not whether the destination has market potential, but whether residents can influence the decisions through which that potential is developed.

This distinction is critical in developing-country destinations, where participation may be publicly endorsed yet constrained by information asymmetry, limited capacity, elite control, weak institutions, and consultation without decision rights (Reindrawati, 2023). Participation also does not automatically produce empowerment; the relationship is reciprocal and depends on whether communities acquire resources, confidence, and authority through repeated engagement (Gutierrez, 2023). A recent systematic review of destination governance found that tokenism remains common even where participatory mechanisms are formally present (Janova et al., 2025). Consequently, counting attendance or volunteer labor can overstate empowerment.

Community-based tourism (CBT) is relevant because it places local people within the planning, production, and distribution of tourism value. Yet partnership can remain unequal when external institutions retain control over finance, agendas, and final decisions, as demonstrated in Bali (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022). Comparative evidence also links destination sustainability to the structure of power and the depth of community involvement (Dong & Nguyen, 2023). In rural destinations, weak social capital and fragmented multilevel governance can prevent tourism from producing broad community benefits (Diaz Rocca & Zielinski, 2022), whereas locally adapted resource strategies can strengthen participation and destination resilience (Rosalina et al., 2023).

Recent studies further show that CBT development is a socio-technical process rather than a stand-alone community activity. Innovation depends on coordination between local institutions, capabilities, and technical systems (Mendoza-Moheno et al., 2021), while experiential learning and facilitation can help communities translate participation into implementable tourism practices (Junaid et al., 2021). Survey evidence indicates that community participation and perceived benefit mediate CBT development (Witchayakawin et al., 2024). Psychological ownership is also associated with rural tourism participation (Guan et al., 2025), but inclusion must account for unequal access to voice, including gendered barriers (Nikjoo et al., 2025).

Evidence from ecotourism and conservation reinforces the same governance problem. Communities are more willing to participate when expected benefits, responsibilities, and environmental outcomes are intelligible (Pineda et al., 2023). Qualitative studies emphasize secure local rights, enforceable participatory policy, and integrated planning (Mpofu & van der Merwe, 2025). Together with the documented persistence of

tokenism in destination governance (Janova et al., 2025), this evidence supports a power-sensitive assessment rather than a binary involved/not-involved classification.

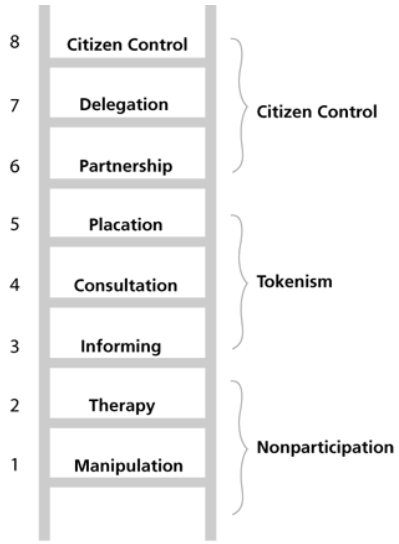


Figure 1. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (adapted from Arnstein, 1969)

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation provides that power-sensitive lens. As summarized in Figure 1, manipulation and therapy constitute non-participation; informing, consultation, and placation constitute tokenism; and partnership, delegated power, and citizen control constitute citizen power (Arnstein, 1969). The ladder is used here as an interpretive framework: the rungs may coexist in one destination, and a high rung observed in one operational domain does not erase lower-power relations in another. This domain-sensitive interpretation is important at Batu Dua. Residents may partner in parking, food services, promotion, or maintenance while remaining only informed or consulted about budgets, infrastructure, event design, or benefit allocation. The analytic question is thus where participation occurs, whose voice is represented, and whether that voice can alter a final decision. This approach avoids treating community support as equivalent to transferred authority.

The study addresses a specific empirical gap: fine-grained evidence on power distribution in the management of a rural paragliding destination remains limited, including in Sumedang. It asks: (1) what forms of participation are evidenced across Arnstein's eight rungs; (2) what is the highest rung supported by the interview, observation, and documentary record; and (3) what governance changes are required to move from operational involvement toward accountable co-management? The contribution is a transparent, data-preserving assessment that distinguishes service participation from decision authority.

METHODS

This study used an interpretive qualitative single-case design (Yin, 2018). The bounded case was community participation in the management of Batu Dua Paragliding, located in Linggajaya Village, Cisitu District, Sumedang Regency. Case selection was appropriate because Batu Dua combines international sport-event exposure with a rural host community and multi-actor management. The unit of analysis was the participation relationship between public institutions, village organizations, and residents, not the technical performance of paragliding operations.

Purposive, role-based sampling covered four perspectives listed in Table 1: N1, a representative of the Sumedang Regency Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports (DISPARBUDPORA); N2, a representative of the Linggajaya Village Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis); N3, a representative of the Linggajaya Village Government; and N4, a resident from the community surrounding Batu Dua. The small sample was selected for institutional coverage rather than statistical representation. It therefore supports an analytic case interpretation, not claims about the prevalence of views across all residents. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews organized around the eight Arnstein rungs, supported by field observation and document review. Figure 2 shows how the three evidence streams were triangulated: interview claims were compared across roles and checked against observed practices and available destination records. Interview questions examined information flows, coaching, dialogue, consultation, representation, operational collaboration, delegation, and control. Quotations were retained in their Indonesian or Sundanese form and translated into English in brackets. Informants are identified only as N1-N4. Because the source study record does not report a formal ethics-approval identifier, no approval number is claimed.

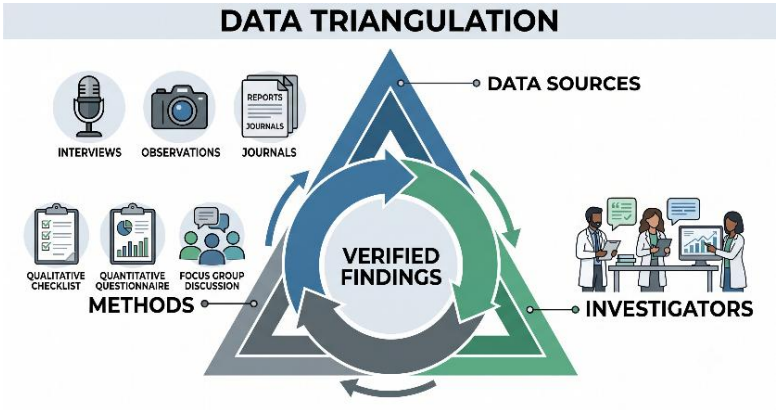


Figure 2. Source and method triangulation used in the study

Table 1. Informant roles and evidence sources

Informant	Role
N1 - DISPARBUDPORA (Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports)	Key
N2 - Linggajaya Village Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group)	Key
N3 - Linggajaya Village Government	Supporting
N4 - Local community surrounding Batu Dua	Supporting

Analysis followed familiarization, first-cycle coding, deductive mapping to Arnstein's eight rungs, within-case comparison, and interpretive theme refinement. Thematic-analysis quality principles informed the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2021), and reporting was checked against the relevant logic of COREQ (Tong et al., 2007). For transparency, the percentage in Table 2 was calculated as $C_r = (n_r/4) \times 100$, where n_r is the number of informants whose response contained evidence consistent with rung r. Thus, 4/4 = 100%, 3/4 = 75%, 2/4 = 50%, and 0/4 = 0%. These values summarize cross-informant corroboration; they are neither inferential statistics nor population estimates. Trustworthiness was supported through source and method triangulation, attention to contradictory evidence, retention of original quotations, and an explicit chain from excerpt to rung (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Tong et al., 2007).

RESULTS

The evidence produced a mixed participation profile rather than a single uniform stage. Table 2 reports all eight rungs and preserves the original cross-informant pattern: manipulation 100%, therapy 100%, informing 75%, consultation 75%, placation 50%, partnership 100%, delegated power 0%, and citizen control 0%. The term 'corroboration' is used because the values indicate how many of N1-N4 provided evidence for each category. Table 3 exposes the respondent-level coding behind those aggregates, and Figure 3 visualizes the complete rung profile. Three interpretive rules governed the mapping. First, a practice was coded by its distribution of authority, not by whether actors described it positively. Second, the rungs were allowed to overlap because information, consultation, and partnership can occur in different management domains. Third, partnership was recorded only where residents contributed resources or work through a reciprocal arrangement; delegated power required evidence that residents could determine or veto core decisions.

The overall pattern is therefore best described as bounded partnership. Residents are consistently present in destination operations, and information and training mechanisms are visible. However, the absence of delegated power and citizen control shows that the highest observed rung applies to supporting activities, not to the entire governance system. All interview excerpts are presented below to preserve the complete qualitative record supplied for the study. Their placement under a rung indicates analytic relevance, while the subsequent interpretation distinguishes reported activity from actual authority.

The evidence also reveals a representation issue. Pokdarwis, village actors, and selected community groups act as communication nodes, but representation does not automatically establish a mandate from, or accountability to, the broader community. This distinction becomes decisive in the tokenism and citizen-power findings. Table 2 should therefore be read as a compact evidence matrix, with the interview excerpts and triangulated interpretation providing its qualitative justification.

Table 2. Arnstein-rung classification and informant corroboration

Level of Participation (Arnstein's Ladder)	Category of Power	Corrob. (%)	Evidence from the qualitative record
1. Manipulation	Non-participation	100%	4/4 informants confirmed institution-led information dissemination through village, government, and community channels.
2. Therapy	Non-participation	100%	4/4 informants reported government-led tourism coaching or training intended to align community practice.
3. Informing	Degrees of tokenism	75%	3/4 informants evidenced two-way information, although dedicated tourism forums were limited.
4. Consultation	Degrees of tokenism	75%	3/4 informants described requests for community views, but suggestions were not necessarily adopted.
5. Placation	Degrees of tokenism	50%	2/4 informants clearly evidenced representative involvement while final authority remained elsewhere.
6. Partnership	Degrees of citizen power	100%	4/4 informants described reciprocal operational collaboration in food, parking, promotion, events, or maintenance.
7. Delegated Power	Degrees of citizen power	0%	0/4 informants identified delegated budgets, formal decision rights, veto authority, or core-management control.
8. Citizen Control	Degrees of citizen power	0%	0/4 informants identified full community control over Batu Dua management.

The findings are organized into three sub-sections so that institution-led participation, consultative participation, and bounded citizen power can be compared directly.

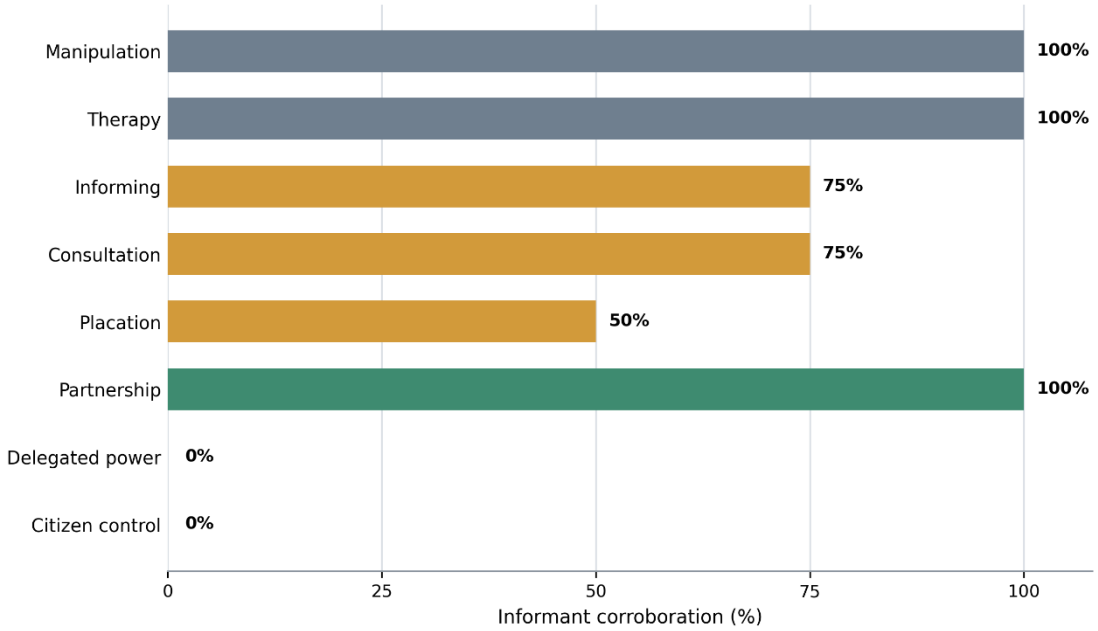


Figure 3. Informant corroboration across Arnstein's eight participation rungs

Table 3. Informant-level evidence matrix (1 = evidence; 0 = not evidenced)

Informant	M	T	I	C	Pl	P	DP	CC
N1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
N2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
N3	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
N4	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Total	4	4	3	3	2	4	0	0

Institution-led participation: manipulation and therapy

Arnstein used manipulation and therapy to describe practices that present participation as education or adjustment without redistributing power (Arnstein, 1969). In Batu Dua, these codes do not mean that information or training has no practical value; they indicate that the agenda, content, and expected behavioral change remain institutionally directed. For manipulation, informants were asked, 'What is the government's mechanism for providing tourism-management information to the community?' The complete responses were:

N1: 'Nah, melalui mekanisme satu permohonan SK lembaga Pokdarwis ya melalui musyawarah desa. Setelah melalui musyawarah desa disepakati langsung dibantu diusulkan melalui kepala desa.' [A Pokdarwis decree is proposed through a village deliberation; after agreement, it is assisted and submitted through the village head.]

N2: 'Biasanya mah urang dapet informasi ti rapat desa atawa ti papan pengumuman di bale desa. Kadang aya oge ti grup WhatsApp warga.' [We usually receive information from village meetings or the notice board at the village hall, and sometimes from the residents' WhatsApp group.]

N3: 'Kadang ti Disparbudpora aya informasi langsung soal acara, urang mah tinggal ngalaksanakeun.' [Sometimes DISPARBUDPORA provides event information directly, and we carry it out.]

N4: 'Biasana mah ibu teh dapet kabar ti tetangga, ti grup WA kampung, kadang oge ti pengumuman di masjid.' [I usually hear from neighbors, the village WhatsApp group, or announcements at the mosque.]

All four informants confirmed that information reaches the community through village deliberation, institutional channels, notice boards, digital groups, neighbors, and public announcements. The network is functional but largely distributional: N3's statement that residents 'carry it out' after receiving event information most clearly indicates an implementation role rather than agenda-setting authority. Therapy was examined through the question, 'Has there been a community coaching program to align local practice with tourism policy?' The responses were:

N1: 'Kami melakukan pembinaan, ya termasuk Pokdarwis; pembinaan itu terhadap lembaganya yang terstruktur sesuai dengan tujuan dibentuk dan fungsi lembaga tersebut.' [We provide coaching, including to Pokdarwis, in line with the organization's purpose and function.]

N2: 'Aya, sering aya pembinaan ti Disparbudpora jeung kabupaten. Biasana ngajarkeun cara nampa wisatawan, ngajaga kabersihan, maksudna supaya warga satuju jeung ngarojong wisata ieu.' [Yes, DISPARBUDPORA and the regency often provide coaching on welcoming tourists and maintaining cleanliness so residents support tourism.]

N3: 'Aya, pelatihan manajemen wisata jeung pelayanan tamu. Maksudna supaya sasuai jeung arahan kabupaten.' [There is training in tourism management and guest service so practice follows regency guidance.]

N4: 'Aya, ibu pernah diundang ka balai desa, aya pelatihan bersih-bersih jeung cara nampa tamu wisatawan. Nya katanya biar urang warga ngarojong jeung ngadukung wisata Batu Dua.' [I was invited

to the village hall for training on cleanliness and welcoming visitors so residents would support Batu Dua tourism.]

Again, all four informants corroborated the practice. The programs build useful service and cleanliness capabilities, but their stated purpose is alignment with government direction. They were therefore coded as therapy in Arnstein's specific sense: institution-led adjustment without evidence that residents determine the training agenda or tourism policy.

Consultative participation: informing, consultation, and placation

Tokenism begins when residents can hear, respond, and advise, but lack assurance that their input will change a decision. Batu Dua shows two-way communication and issue-specific consultation, yet agenda control and final authority remain concentrated. Informants were asked, 'Is information about tourism plans provided one-way, or is there dialogue?' Their responses were:

N1: 'Bisa satu arahan atau ada dialog tadi kalau secara dialog dengan mitra pariwisata, kalau secara terarah ya dengan salah satu mitra.' [Communication can be directive or dialogic; dialogue occurs with tourism partners, while directed communication goes through a selected partner.]

N2: 'Aya, info datang ti rapat rutin desa atawa pengumuman resmi. Aya oge forum rembug warga, tapi teu kabeh pendapat langsung dipake, kudu dipertimbangkeun heula.' [Information comes from regular village meetings or official announcements. There is also a residents' forum, but not every opinion is used immediately.]

N3: 'Biasana ti rapat resmi jeung pihak desa atawa kabupaten. Bisa masihan tanggapan, tapi teu kabeh bisa langsung dirobah.' [It usually comes through official meetings with the village or regency. We can respond, but not everything can be changed immediately.]

N4: 'Kadang aya info ti pengurus desa, tapi forum khusus mah jarang. Palingan lamun aya rapat RT atawa RW, urang nyelip ngomong.' [Sometimes information comes from village administrators, but dedicated forums are rare; we usually raise tourism matters during RT or RW meetings.]

Three informants provided clear evidence of two-way exchange, producing 75% corroboration for informing. However, dialogue is mediated by selected partners and tourism is sometimes inserted into general neighborhood meetings rather than discussed in a dedicated forum. Access to speak is therefore present, but agenda space is limited.

Consultation was explored through the question, 'How does the government accommodate community aspirations?' The responses were:

N1: 'Ya, dari pemerintah sendiri tentu kami menyediakan berupa layanan masyarakat, kemudian bisa melalui musyawarah, atau bisa juga melalui online.' [The government provides public services; aspirations can be submitted through deliberation or online channels.]

N2: 'Kungsi, waktu rencana ngalegaan parkiran urang dimintakeun pendapat.' [Yes, we were asked for our opinion when the parking area was going to be expanded.]

N3: 'Kungsi, waktu rencana nyieun spot foto anyar. Saran urang dipake sabagian.' [Yes, when a new photo spot was planned; some of our suggestions were used.]

N4: 'Kungsi, waktu bahas soal lahan parkir. Ibu nyarankeun supaya aya tempat teduh keur nu nunggu.' [Yes, when the parking area was discussed; I suggested a shaded waiting place.]

The issue-specific examples show that residents are consulted on parking and visitor facilities, and three accounts supported the 75% classification. Yet partial uptake of suggestions and the lack of evidence about response tracking indicate consultation rather than shared decision authority. Available service and online channels are opportunities for input, not proof that input is consequential. Placation was examined through the question, 'Does the government involve the community in tourism meetings or deliberations?' The responses were:

N1: 'Tentunya melibatkan, jadi pelibatan ini tidak masyarakat secara umum, tapi masyarakat secara kepengurusan yang dalam bentuk kelompok atau lembaga.' [The community is involved, but not the public generally; participation occurs through administrators organized in groups or institutions.]

N2: 'Pernah, tapi pengaruh warga mah masih terbatas. Biasana nu mutuskeun terakhir tetep pihak pengelola jeung desa.' [Yes, but residents' influence is still limited; final decisions usually remain with the manager and village.]

N3: 'Sok dilibetkeun.' [We are often involved.]

N4: 'Pernah.' [Yes, I have been involved.]

Bounded citizen power: partnership without delegation

Citizen power requires more than voice: it involves negotiated responsibility and a meaningful share of authority. The Batu Dua evidence supports partnership in operational

domains, but it contains no example of delegated power over core management and no example of citizen control.

For partnership, informants described the following arrangements:

N1: 'Tujuan niat awalnya membentuk Pokdarwis untuk apa? Otomatis di situ ada objek, ada potensi wisata lokal, ada potensi kuliner, ada potensi handicraft atau aktivitas budaya lainnya.' [Pokdarwis was formed because the area has an attraction and potential in local tourism, culinary products, handicrafts, and cultural activities.]

N2: 'Aya gawe bareng, contona warga nyayogikeun jajanan jeung parkiran.' [There is collaboration; for example, residents provide snacks and parking.]

N3: 'Kerja bareng dina promosi, lomba, jeung perawatan fasilitas.' [We collaborate on promotion, competitions, and facility maintenance.]

N4: 'Aya, misalna warga nyadiakeun jajanan, kopi, parkir.' [Yes, residents provide snacks, coffee, and parking.]

All informants corroborated tangible collaboration, explaining the 100% partnership value. Its scope is nevertheless bounded: residents supply services, labor, local products, promotion, and maintenance, while the data contain no decision in which the wider community held a formal vote, veto, delegated budget, management concession, or controlling authority. Partnership is therefore the highest observed rung, but delegated power and citizen control remain at 0%.

DISCUSSION

The principal finding is not that Batu Dua occupies one homogeneous rung, but that it combines institution-led information and coaching, tokenistic voice, and operational partnership. The ladder profile in Table 2 reveals a partnership ceiling: residents are indispensable to destination delivery, yet their participation has not crossed into formally delegated decision authority. This distinction resolves the apparent contradiction between high operational involvement and low control. The 100% values for manipulation and therapy should not be read as achievements to maximize. They show that all four roles recognize government-led information and behavioral-capacity programs. These mechanisms can improve service quality, cleanliness, and coordination, but in Arnstein's

framework they remain low-power when institutions define the message and desired response (Arnstein, 1969).

This interpretation matters because information abundance can mask authority scarcity. Batu Dua has multiple communication channels, including village meetings, notice boards, WhatsApp groups, and mosque announcements, but the evidence does not identify public access to budgets, management agreements, event contracts, revenue statements, or decision rationales. A stronger information regime would disclose not only what residents should do, but what is being decided, by whom, with what resources, and how objections are resolved. The 75% informing and consultation values indicate real dialogue, especially around parking and visitor facilities. Nevertheless, the 50% placation value and N2's explicit statement that final decisions remain with managers and the village reveal a weak transmission mechanism between community voice and binding outcomes. This pattern aligns with recent evidence that destination participation frequently persists at tokenistic levels despite formal opportunities to speak (Janova et al., 2025; Reindrawati, 2023).

Representation through Pokdarwis and organized groups is practical, but its democratic quality depends on selection rules, constituency coverage, feedback obligations, and the ability to challenge a decision. Without those safeguards, a representative may facilitate communication while leaving the wider community outside agenda setting. Comparable CBT research shows that partnerships can reproduce asymmetrical power (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022) and that community involvement contributes to sustainability only when authority and accountability accompany participation (Dong & Nguyen, 2023). Batu Dua's strongest asset is the community's demonstrated operational capacity. Parking, food and beverage provision, promotion, competition support, and facility maintenance embed local resources in the visitor economy. Evidence from rural and community-based tourism shows that local benefits are more durable when social capital, resource strategies, and participatory planning are aligned (Diaz Rocca & Zielinski, 2022; Mpofu & van der Merwe, 2025; Rosalina et al., 2023). The present data therefore support strengthening the existing partnership rather than replacing it.

A feasible governance pathway has four components. First, establish a Batu Dua co-management forum with published membership and reserved seats for Pokdarwis, village government, service providers, youth, women, land-related interests, and non-affiliated residents. Second, define which decisions are consultative, jointly decided, or delegated,

including event operations, facility priorities, vendor allocation, maintenance funds, and visitor-impact rules. Third, publish revenue and expenditure summaries and adopt an agreed benefit-sharing mechanism. Fourth, use periodic community scorecards to track safety, cleanliness, environmental condition, local enterprise participation, complaint resolution, and the proportion of proposals accepted with reasons. These mechanisms would make partnership verifiable and create a route toward delegated power.

The findings must be interpreted within three limitations. The four role-based informants provide information-rich institutional coverage but cannot represent the full diversity of residents; the corroboration percentages are descriptive only. The cross-sectional record cannot show how participation changes across event and non-event periods. Finally, the source record does not provide a formal ethics identifier or detailed audit metadata such as fieldwork dates. Future research should expand resident sampling, disaggregate gender and livelihood positions, examine contracts and financial flows, and repeat the ladder assessment longitudinally.

CONCLUSION

Community participation in Batu Dua is substantial but uneven. The community is consistently informed and trained, is sometimes consulted through dialogue and representation, and collaborates directly in parking, local food and beverage services, promotion, competition support, and facility maintenance. These practices make partnership the highest observed Arnstein rung. They do not, however, demonstrate that the destination as a whole has reached citizen power: no evidence supports delegated authority or citizen control over core management. Batu Dua should therefore be understood as a bounded partnership with strong operational potential and an incomplete redistribution of decision power. Converting that potential into durable community-based sport-tourism governance requires formal co-management, explicit decision rights, transparent benefit-sharing, accountable representation, and participatory monitoring.

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