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## Acculturation of Javanese and Chinese Culture in Rural Tourism in Desa Wisata Besani

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**Abstract:** The research paper investigates the cultural exchange between Javanese and Chinese traditions in rural tourism at Desa Wisata Besani, Central Java. Rural tourism has become popular among international travelers seeking authentic experiences and sustainable community engagement. Desa Wisata Besani, known as the "Acculturation Gate of Java-China," offers a unique blend of Javanese and Chinese influences, making it an intriguing destination. The study uses qualitative methods to understand the factors attracting tourists and the impact on the local community's livelihood and identity. The village's strengths, such as its rich cultural heritage and strategic location, contribute to its aspiration of becoming a thriving rural tourism destination and a cultural exchange hub. The rising interest in cultural tourism and China's investments present growth opportunities for the village. Integrating Mandarin language learning into the tourism experience further enhances its appeal to Chinese tourists. The study acknowledges limitations and suggests future research directions. In conclusion, Desa Wisata Besani showcases the potential of rural tourism in fostering cultural understanding and appreciation, benefiting both tourists and the local community.

**Keywords:** acculturation, rural tourism, sustainable tourism, tourism village

**JEL Classification:** L83, Q56, Z32



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## Introduction

In recent years, the global tourism industry has witnessed a shift in preferences among travelers seeking unique and culturally immersive experiences (Hunt & Harbor, 2019; Sianipar et al., 2021). Rural tourism, with its focus on authentic encounters and sustainable community engagement, has emerged as an attractive option for international visitors (López-Sanz et al., 2021; Lane et al., 2022). Desa Wisata Besani, located amidst the scenic landscapes of Batang Regency, Central Java, stands as a proof to the rich intermingling of cultures, making it an interesting destination for tourists seeking a harmonious blend of Javanese traditions and Chinese influences.

Besani, a village with slogan of "Acculturation Gate of Java-China," is uniquely positioned near the beautiful Pagilaran tea plantation, offering an enchanting backdrop for cultural exploration (Sударsono, 2023). Embracing its inherent potential, this tourism village aspires to introduce community-based tourism, captivating visitors with the essence of Javanese heritage while providing a platform for Mandarin language learning.

The decision to incorporate Mandarin into the tourism experience is not arbitrary; it is a calculated response to China's extensive investment programs on the island of Java, particularly evident in the establishment of an international integrated industrial area within Batang Regency (Sutinnarto, 2022).

This paper tries to unravel the compelling narrative of Desa Wisata Besani's acculturation of Javanese and Chinese culture within the realm of rural tourism. It aims to delve into the intricacies of this unique fusion (Murti, 2020), examining how the preservation of Javanese customs harmoniously intertwines with the inclusion of Mandarin language learning to cater to the rising wave of Chinese tourists seeking ventures beyond their homeland (Candrawati, 2019; Adi & Rinada, 2020; Prakosa et al., 2022). The Acculturation Gate of Java-China not only showcases the authenticity of Javanese cultural practices but also acts as a bridge connecting international tourists, particularly from China, with the charms of rural life (Özekici & Ünlüönen, 2019; Cho et al., 2021). The strategic location of Besani in proximity to the burgeoning industrial area highlights its potential as a melting pot of cultures and a gateway for cross-cultural exchanges (Gui et al., 2012; Kretschmer & Kruse, 2020; Lefrid et al., 2022).

The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth and comprehensive description of the current state of Desa Wisata Besani, with a particular focus on the potential and development of rural tourism in this village. By employing qualitative exploration and data analysis, this paper aims to uncover the underlying motivations that attract international tourists to this enchanting destination. Through in depth interviews, observations, and document analysis the study seeks to understand the diverse factors that contribute to Desa Wisata Besani's appeal as a cultural and linguistic melting pot.

One essential aspect of this exploration revolves around investigating tourists' experiences with the unique acculturation of Javanese and Chinese culture in the village (Darheni, 2018; Basiroen & Manuaba, 2022; Alam, 2023). The study will delve into how the amalgamation of these two distinct cultural backgrounds enriches the tourists' encounters, creating a one-of-a-kind experience that cannot be replicated elsewhere (Bakir et al., 2017; Tang & Xu, 2023). By capturing and analyzing the firsthand narratives of visitors, the paper will shed light on the transformative power of these cross-cultural interactions, shaping the way tourists perceive both the Javanese heritage and the Chinese influence within the community.

Moreover, the research seeks to highlight the profound impact of rural tourism on the local community's livelihoods and sense of identity. As international tourists immerse themselves in the daily life of Desa Wisata Besani, engaging with the locals and participating in cultural activities, their presence undoubtedly leaves an indelible mark on the village's social fabric. The study will explore how such interactions influence the economic opportunities and social dynamics within the community. It will assess the role of tourism-generated income in supporting local businesses and enhancing the overall quality of life for the villagers.

By combining qualitative research methods and data analysis, this study endeavors to paint a vivid and comprehensive picture of Desa Wisata Besani as a rural tourism destination. Through this exploration, the paper aims to offer valuable insights into the potential for growth and sustainable development of rural tourism in the village. Ultimately, the findings of this research will contribute to the broader understanding of the significance of cultural acculturation in shaping rural tourism experiences and its implications for both the local community and international visitors.

## Research Method

This qualitative paper adopts a case study approach to investigate rural tourism development in Desa Wisata Besani, with a focus on the acculturation of Javanese and Chinese

culture and the establishment of a Mandarin learning center. Primary data will be collected through in-depth interviews and observations within the village, with the key informant being the Person in Charge (PIC) of Desa Wisata Besani. The PIC proposed the idea of promoting cultural exchange and Mandarin learning to attract Chinese tourists due to the growing investments in the region.

Secondary data will be gathered from the village administrator's compiled profile and relevant scientific papers on rural tourism and acculturation. Thematic analysis will be applied to the data with steps of data familiarization, code generation, search of themes, reviewing the theme, defining and naming theme, and producing the narration (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). SOAR matrix will then be used to categorize findings into Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (Khavarian-Garmsir & Zare, 2014).

The Strengths section will identify internal factors that make Desa Wisata Besani an appealing rural tourism destination, such as its rich cultural heritage, geographical advantages, and existing infrastructure. In the Opportunities section, external factors like China's investment programs and the increasing interest in cultural tourism will be explored as potential growth opportunities for the village.

Aspirations will be aligned with the desired outcomes for rural tourism, considering the village's aspirations and vision for the future. In the Results section, specific and measurable objectives will be formulated to achieve these aspirations, focusing on cultural exchange, tourist satisfaction, and community development.

Based on the SOAR analysis, the paper will provide strategies and recommendations for sustainable tourism development in Desa Wisata Besani. The proposed strategies will leverage identified strengths and opportunities, aiming to foster tourism growth while preserving the village's cultural heritage and benefiting the local community.

## Result and Discussion

### *Desa Wisata Besani*

Besani Tourism Village is located in the Blado sub-district, Batang regency, Central Java province. The administrative area of this village is 233.83 hectares with seven hamlets or hamlets, Senepo, Tegaron, Jono, Kecepit, Semare, Sijo, and Besani. This village is bordered by the villages of West Selopajang and East Selopajang to the north, Keteleng Village to the south, Kalisari Village to the east, and Wonobodro Village to the west. Besani Village is 30.5 km from the Batang Regency government center and 87.5 km from the provincial government center, the city of Semarang.

Besani Village has 3,051 residents in 2023 with the majority of the population aged 15-39 years and working as farmers or ranchers. The vision of Besani Tourism Village is "Realizing Besani Tourism Village as the Acculturation Gateway of Java and China by preserving cultural heritage supported by competitive education and digitalization development in the global arena." The tagline depicts a statement that conveys to its readers that Desa Wisata Besani serves as a gateway for fostering bilateral relations through traditional and educational tourism in the era of modernization and globalization, contributing to the economic resurgence of Indonesia. It also emphasizes the preservation of Javanese culture to prevent erosion, while introducing Javanese cultural traditions to the world.

Besani Tourism Village develops five types of tourism activities, namely cultural, natural, spiritual, educational, and artificial tourism. These tourism activities are interrelated and aim to provide a unique experience for tourists in the context of rural tourism. Educational tourism activities were the last to be developed, namely during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this educational tourism activity, there is a Mandarin village program and teaching Mandarin to the community so they are ready to welcome foreign tourists from China.

The Chairperson of the Besani Tourism Village is Mrs. Nita Zanita who has experience in managing tourist villages in Badung, Bali and Pekalongan Regency. Besani Tourism Village is a pilot tourism village, but has received several awards such as the top 100 Indonesian Tourism Village Awards 2022 and 75 best tourist villages in the 2023 Indonesian Tourism Village Awards event out of 4583 tourist villages in Indonesia visited by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

*SOAR Analysis*

Scholars sought to enhance strategic planning by merging the well-known SWOT technique with Appreciative Inquiry (AI), resulting in the innovative strategic model known as SOAR (Khavarian-Garmsir & Zare, 2014). The SOAR matrix for rural tourism development is a strategic planning tool used to assess and analyze the potential and strategies for growth in a rural tourism destination (Khorasani et al., 2017). Unlike the traditional SWOT analysis, which focuses on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the SOAR matrix emphasizes a positive and future-oriented approach, concentrating on an organization's positive aspects and its aspirations for the future (Keerin et al., 2022).

**Table 1.** SOAR Framework

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Rich Cultural Heritage: Desa Wisata Besani's diverse and vibrant Javanese cultural heritage, encompassing traditional practices, art forms, and rituals, forms the foundation for authentic and immersive cultural experiences that can captivate tourists seeking meaningful encounters.	Rising Interest in Cultural Tourism: In the face of a global trend towards cultural tourism, Desa Wisata Besani stands well-positioned to attract visitors seeking deeper cultural connections and meaningful interactions, thus paving the way for sustainable tourism growth.
Scenic Location: The village's strategic positioning near the captivating Pagilaran tea plantation, with its breathtaking natural landscapes, presents a unique opportunity to offer visitors an enchanting blend of cultural experiences and a rejuvenating connection with nature.	China's Investment Programs: The burgeoning investments from China in the region present a valuable opportunity for Desa Wisata Besani to engage in collaborative initiatives that foster cultural exchange and deepen bilateral relations, driving a substantial influx of Chinese tourists to the village.
Community Involvement: The active and enthusiastic participation of the local community in the tourism initiative is a formidable strength. Their deep-rooted commitment to preserving their cultural traditions and the warm hospitality they extend to visitors create a sense of belonging and authenticity that enhances the overall tourism experience.	Promotion of Mandarin Language Learning: Capitalizing on China's growing influence, the establishment of a Mandarin language learning center in Desa Wisata Besani can offer a transformative experience for Chinese tourists, encouraging cross-cultural communication, and amplifying the appeal of the village as an educational destination (Yuniarto, 2017).
Geographical Proximity to Investment Hub: The village's location within the Batang Regency, a focal point of significant foreign investments, provides Desa Wisata Besani with a strategic advantage. This geographical	

proximity attracts a diverse pool of potential tourists, particularly from China, as it becomes a gateway for exploring cultural exchanges amidst an evolving economic landscape (Liu et al., 2023).

Aspirations	Results
<p>Become a Cultural Exchange Hub: Desa Wisata Besani aspires to emerge as a dynamic cultural exchange hub, facilitating meaningful interactions between Javanese and Chinese cultures through tourism and educational programs. The village aims to foster mutual understanding and appreciation, thus paving the way for enhanced cultural diplomacy and cooperation.</p>	<p>Increased Tourist Arrivals: Desa Wisata Besani endeavors to achieve a substantial increase in tourist arrivals, with a particular emphasis on attracting Chinese tourists, by effectively showcasing its rich cultural heritage and the appeal of the Mandarin language learning center.</p>
<p>Sustainable Tourism Development: With a vision for sustainable tourism growth, Desa Wisata Besani seeks to strike a delicate balance between attracting visitors and preserving the environment and cultural heritage. The aspiration is to ensure that tourism development nurtures the well-being of the local community and safeguards the essence of the village for future generations.</p>	<p>Positive Cultural Exchange: The village envisions fostering transformative cultural exchange experiences between tourists and locals, kindling intercultural understanding, respect, and appreciation. These interactions are expected to transcend geographical boundaries and leave a lasting impact on both visitors and the local community.</p>
<p>Economic Growth and Community Empowerment: At the core of Desa Wisata Besani's aspirations is the desire to harness tourism's economic potential for the local community's empowerment. The village aims to create a ripple effect of prosperity, generating income and livelihood opportunities that uplift the standard of living for its residents (Jha, 2021).</p>	<p>Improved Livelihoods: Successful tourism development is anticipated to create additional income streams and catalyze socio-economic progress for the residents of Desa Wisata Besani. The results include enhanced livelihood opportunities and improved socio-economic indicators, bolstering the village's resilience and sustainable growth (Upadhaya et al., 2022).</p>

Source: Data processed

Desa Wisata Besani boasts several strengths that align with its goal of becoming a premier cultural tourism destination. Firstly, its rich cultural heritage, including diverse Javanese cultural traditions, attracts tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. This cultural richness contributes to the village's attractiveness as a cultural tourism destination.

Additionally, its strategic location near the Pagilaran tea plantation offers a unique blend of cultural experiences and natural beauty, diversifying tourist experiences and enhancing the destination's appeal. Active community involvement preserves cultural traditions and creates a warm and hospitable environment for visitors, strengthening the cultural immersion aspect of the tourism experience (Xu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the village's geographical proximity to a thriving investment hub positions it as a gateway for cultural exchange, attracting a diverse pool of potential tourists, particularly from China. Desa Wisata Besani is well-poised to capitalize on opportunities

presented by the rising interest in cultural tourism and China's investment programs. Collaborative initiatives, including a Mandarin language learning center, can enhance cross-cultural communication and broaden the village's appeal (Gyasi et al., 2021).

The village's aspirations align with global trends, and it aims to increase tourist arrivals, foster positive cultural exchange, and enhance the livelihoods of its residents. This forward-thinking approach positions it as a beacon of cultural understanding and sustainable growth in the global tourism landscape (Matteucci et al., 2022). In doing so, Desa Wisata Besani not only enriches the lives of both visitors and the local community but also contributes significantly to the broader field of cultural tourism and rural development.

## Conclusion

In summary, this research into the acculturation of Javanese and Chinese culture within rural tourism at Desa Wisata Besani has yielded substantial findings. We have unveiled a remarkable amalgamation of cultural traditions within this unique village, characterized by its cultural richness, strategic geographical location near the Pagilaran tea plantation, active community participation, and proximity to a burgeoning investment hub. These attributes collectively render Desa Wisata Besani an enticing destination for travelers in pursuit of authentic cultural experiences.

The practical implications of our findings extend to policymakers, local communities, and the tourism industry. These insights can inform strategies to bolster sustainable rural tourism. To further its potential as a cultural exchange center, we recommend the incorporation of Mandarin language learning into the tourist experience, aligning with the increasing influx of Chinese tourists. This research significantly contributes to the field of rural tourism and cultural acculturation by exemplifying the role of rural destinations as facilitators of profound cultural exchange. Moving forward, it is imperative for subsequent studies to delve into the preferences of tourists hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds and to scrutinize the influence of digital platforms on rural tourism promotion.

In terms of actionable recommendations, Desa Wisata Besani is encouraged to harness its inherent strengths, seize available opportunities, and earnestly pursue its aspirations. This encompasses efforts to attract a diverse spectrum of tourists, safeguard cultural heritage, and cultivate cross-cultural interactions. While we acknowledge the constraints of this study, notably its relatively confined scope and reliance on qualitative data, it underscores the exigency of broader, quantitative investigations in the future. Furthermore, longitudinal research should be undertaken to gauge the enduring sustainability and socio-economic ramifications of rural tourism on local communities.

In conclusion, Desa Wisata Besani stands as an exemplar of rural tourism's potential to engender cultural exchange and mutual appreciation. By adroitly leveraging its strengths and capitalizing on unfolding opportunities, it can emerge as a paragon of cultural immersion and sustainable tourism development. This will satiate the mounting global demand for authentic experiences while concurrently bridging the chasm between Javanese and Chinese cultures, thereby nurturing a harmonious fabric of understanding and reverence in the ever-evolving milieu of global tourism.

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