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EMPOWERING THE YOUNG GENERATION THROUGH THE TOURISM AMBASSADOR COMPETITION TO ENHANCE THE TOURISM SECTOR AND STIMULATE NEW ECONOMIC GROWTH IN LEBAK REGENCY

Nidaan Khofiya^{1*}, Salsha Awalia² Ari Apriyansa³

¹Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jl. Rawamangun Muka, Pulo Gadung, Jakarta Timur 13220, Indonesia; email: nkhofiya27@gmail.com

*Correspondence

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Abstrak: Sektor pariwisata merupakan salah satu penggerak utama pembangunan ekonomi di Indonesia, termasuk di Kabupaten Lebak. Akan tetapi, meskipun memiliki kekayaan alam dan budaya, pariwisata di daerah tersebut masih belum berkembang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana Kompetisi Duta Wisata memberdayakan generasi muda dan berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan pariwisata dan pertumbuhan ekonomi baru. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan penyelenggara, peserta, dan masyarakat setempat, serta pengamatan langsung terhadap kegiatan kompetisi. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa kompetisi tersebut meningkatkan keterlibatan pemuda dalam mempromosikan pariwisata dengan mengembangkan keterampilan komunikasi, kepemimpinan, dan advokasi. Peserta berperan sebagai duta wisata lokal yang secara aktif mempromosikan destinasi, melibatkan masyarakat, dan meningkatkan kesadaran tentang potensi pariwisata daerah tersebut. Inisiatif ini tidak hanya meningkatkan visibilitas pariwisata tetapi juga merangsang kegiatan ekonomi lokal melalui peningkatan jumlah pengunjung dan inisiatif pariwisata berbasis masyarakat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemberdayaan pemuda melalui program terstruktur seperti kompetisi ini merupakan strategi yang efektif untuk merevitalisasi sektor pariwisata dan mendukung pembangunan daerah yang inklusif. Implikasi praktis Pemerintah daerah telah membentuk program pariwisata berbasis pemuda, memperkuat dukungan kelembagaan, memperluas inisiatif pelatihan, dan mengintegrasikan kegiatan duta besar ke dalam strategi promosi pariwisata regional yang lebih luas untuk memastikan dampak jangka panjang dan keberlanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Generasi muda, Duta Wisata, sektor pariwisata, kebangkitan ekonomi, Kabupaten Lebak.

Abstract: The tourism sector is a key driver of economic development in Indonesia, including in Lebak Regency. However, despite its rich natural and cultural resources, tourism in the region remains underdeveloped. This study aims to examine how the Tourism Ambassador Competition empowers the younger generation and contributes to tourism development and new economic growth. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews with organizers, participants, and local communities, as well as direct observation of competition activities. The findings reveal that the competition enhances youth engagement in promoting tourism by developing communication, leadership, and advocacy skills. Participants serve as local tourism

ambassadors who actively promote destinations, engage with communities, and raise awareness about the region's tourism potential. This initiative not only increases tourism visibility but also stimulates local economic activity through growing visitor numbers and community-based tourism initiatives. The study concludes that empowering youth through structured programs such as this competition is an effective strategy to revitalize the tourism sector and support inclusive local development. Practical implications the local government has established a youth-based tourism program, strengthened institutional support, expanded training initiatives, and integrated ambassador activities into broader regional tourism promotion strategies to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

Keywords: Youth Generation, Tourism Ambassador, Tourism Sector, Economic Revival, Lebak Regency

I. Introduction

The tourism sector plays a vital role in Indonesia's economy (Yamin et al., 2021). The natural and cultural potential of each region, whether in major cities or remote areas, serves as a key attraction for both domestic and international tourists (Richards et al., 2020). Lebak Regency, located in Banten Province, is one of Indonesia's regions endowed with diverse natural and cultural wealth that remains underexplored (Waluya et al., 2022). This regency offers various tourist destinations, including scenic beaches, mountains, and lakes, as well as rich cultural heritage reflecting the local wisdom of its people (Jamil & Briandana, 2023).

However, despite its significant potential, the tourism sector in Lebak Regency faces several pressing challenges. Among the most prominent issues are the lack of adequate infrastructure at tourist destinations, minimal investment in tourism promotion, limited access to up-to-date tourism information, and weak coordination between stakeholders. Additionally, there is a lack of systematic efforts to package and market local attractions to a wider audience. Many tourism sites remain poorly maintained and are not equipped with supporting facilities such as signage, sanitation, or proper access roads, which negatively affect the visitor experience and hinder return visits. These problems are further compounded by limited human resources who are skilled in tourism management, particularly in remote or rural areas (Shofi Elmia, 2023). Implementation of development have a role as development agents(Ginting & Wahyuningsih, 2024)

Within this context, the limited involvement of local communities especially the younger generation has emerged as a critical issue that must be addressed. The younger generation plays a crucial role in the advancement of the tourism sector, as they serve as change agents who can bring innovation, creativity, and fresh perspectives necessary for promoting and managing tourism destinations (Thommandru et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, the Lebak Regency Government has initiated various programs to raise public awareness of local tourism potential, one of which is the Tourism Ambassador Competition. This competition aims to select young individuals who not only possess strong communication skills but also have extensive knowledge of their region's tourism potential (Sulistyo & Arswendi, n.d.). Tourism Ambassadors are expected to serve as the face of tourism promotion in Lebak Regency and act as agents of change, inspiring other young people to contribute to the sustainability and development of the tourism sector. Furthermore, this competition is expected to create positive economic impacts by fostering new economic opportunities through tourism, ultimately improving the well-being of the local community (Hidayah et al., 2021).

Despite various initiatives undertaken to promote tourism development in Lebak Regency, the management and promotional efforts remain suboptimal (Kurniawan & Prawiro, 2024). The lack of youth involvement in the sector remains a major issue that needs to be addressed. The younger generation has immense potential to enhance the appeal of tourism destinations through technology, social media, and creative approaches to packaging tourism products. However, there are still limited initiatives that provide them with opportunities for active participation in managing and promoting regional tourism (Sfodera et al., 2024).

The Tourism Ambassador Competition in Lebak Regency is one of the efforts aimed at addressing these challenges. However, despite being held annually, there has been no in-depth research examining how this competition strengthens the role of the younger generation in the tourism sector and its impact on tourism development and local economic revitalization. This reveals a research gap that needs to be filled specifically, how the competition influences youth awareness and engagement in regional tourism development and how it contributes to new economic growth in Lebak Regency.

This research gap is particularly relevant, as Indonesia's tourism sector especially in regions with significant but underutilized tourism potential requires special attention to encourage youth participation. In this context, the Tourism Ambassador Competition has the potential to be an effective instrument in mobilizing the younger generation as agents of change who can accelerate tourism development and stimulate local economic revival (Percy-Smith & Burns, 2013).

This study aims to analyze the role of the Tourism Ambassador Competition in strengthening the younger generation as change agents in the tourism sector of Lebak Regency. In this study, the term "younger generation" refers to individuals aged 17 to 30 years, in accordance with the age criteria typically applied in youth development

programs and national youth policy in Indonesia. This group is generally considered to be in the transitional phase between adolescence and adulthood, where they are actively seeking identity, skills, and career pathways, and are highly adaptive to digital technologies. In contrast, the older generation, typically aged 50 years and above, often lacks digital literacy and technological familiarity, which can hinder their involvement in modern tourism promotion strategies that rely on social media and online platforms. Specifically, this research seeks to:

1. Enhance youth awareness and knowledge of regional tourism potential,
2. Analyze the contributions of young people involved in the Tourism Ambassador Competition to the development of the tourism sector in Lebak Regency, and
3. Identify the impact of the Tourism Ambassador Competition on new economic growth in Lebak Regency through increased tourist visits and local tourism promotion.

Through these objectives, this study aims to provide a clearer understanding of how the Tourism Ambassador Competition influences the tourism sector and local economy in Lebak Regency, as well as offer recommendations for tourism sector stakeholders to optimize youth potential in advancing this sector.

Previous studies have demonstrated that youth involvement in the tourism sector can positively impact destination development and local economic growth. According to Hysa (2021), the younger generation plays a crucial role in utilizing technology and social media to promote regional tourism (Hysa et al., 2021). Winchenbach (2019) found that youth engagement in tourism not only enhances destination appeal but also contributes to job creation and increased local income (Winchenbach et al., 2019).

The Tourism Ambassador Competition, as a form of youth empowerment, has been proven effective in raising awareness and knowledge about tourism (Morand et al., 2021). Maulana (2019) stated that this competition helps shape individuals with strong communication skills and the ability to promote and manage tourism destinations. Moreover, the competition provides participants with personal development opportunities, fosters appreciation for local culture, and directly contributes to regional tourism advancement (Maulana Majid, 2019).

From an economic perspective, Valeri (2024) argues that youth-led tourism promotion can expand the market reach of tourism, both locally and internationally. Increased tourist arrivals lead to job creation and improved local income (Deb et al., 2024). Therefore, youth empowerment through the Tourism Ambassador Competition is

expected to make a significant contribution to new economic growth through the tourism sector in Lebak Regency.

This study holds significant value as it contributes to tourism sector development efforts in Lebak Regency. The findings of this research are expected to provide a clear understanding of the role of the Tourism Ambassador Competition in strengthening the younger generation as change agents in the tourism sector, as well as its impact on local economic revival (Menayang & Marta, 2020). The results can also offer recommendations for local governments and relevant stakeholders in designing more effective policies and programs to empower the younger generation in tourism.

Additionally, this study will enrich the literature on the impact of the Tourism Ambassador Competition on the tourism sector and local economy (Namira & Marzuki, 2023), and provide new insights into how the younger generation can contribute to the sustainable development of tourism (Vieira et al., 2020). Thus, this research has the potential to generate broad positive impacts, not only for Lebak Regency but also for other regions with similar tourism potential.

II. Literature Review

Several studies that are relevant to the research conducted are as follows. Research by (Chancellor, 2021) with the research title "Destination ambassador programs: Building informed tourist friendly destinations" discusses concerning tourism ambassador programs to increase tourist satisfaction. The results of this study indicate that holding a tourism ambassador program has been proven to improve tourist services, can increase awareness and the importance of tourism as an industry and local attraction, and can strengthen the relationship between stakeholders and local tourism (Chancellor et al., 2021)

Research by (Diani, 2024) with the research title "Promotional Strategies and the Role of Tourism Ambassadors in Increasing Tourist Visits in Penajam Paser Utara Regency. The study aims to examine the promotional strategies and role of tourism ambassadors in increasing tourist visits in Penajam Paser Utara Regency, as well as to identify factors that support and inhibit the effectiveness of these strategies in attracting more tourists. This study states that business actors and tourism ambassadors play a crucial role in increasing the number of tourist visits. A well-planned promotional strategy is needed, including the provision of information boards regarding the location, distance, and transportation that can be used at each tourist destination. This aims to make it easier for tourists to access tourist attractions in Penajam Paser Utara Regency. In addition, the

use of mass media, websites, and various other promotional media is an effective step in disseminating tourism information in the area (Alifiah Diani, 2024).

Research by (Mir, 2023) entitled "Tourism as an Engine for Economic Diversification: An exploratory study of Saudi Arabia's Tourism Strategy and Marketing Initiatives". This study states that the tourism industry can improve a country's economy and can create jobs, the importance of developing the tourism industry because this right can be one of the main drivers of the country's economy. This study discusses the analysis of the role of tourism marketing in building a growing and brilliant tourism sector (Mir & Kulibi, 2023).

Research by (Sutikno, 2024) entitled "Prioritization Strategies for Enhancing Tourism Development at Plaosan Tem(Alifiah Diani, 2024)ple Cultural Heritage Site in Klaten Regency". This research aims to determine the priority strategy for developing cultural heritage tourism at Plaosan Temple and increasing promotion by the central government, Klaten Regional Government, and related stakeholders from the community and the private sector. This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design. Tourism is very important for Indonesia's growth because it not only generates foreign exchange but also empowers local communities through their involvement in the tourism sector (Nur Sutikno, 2024).

Research by (Pratama, 2024) entitled "Community-Based Action Plans for Coastal Area Infrastructure Enhancement: A Strategy For Sustainable Tourism Development". This study states that development involving all elements of local society and collaboration with the private sector is expected to be able to create an integrated coastal area, including settlements, infrastructure, and tourism potential. Sustainable development with the active involvement of the community as a whole can build community and city resilience in facing future challenges (Pratama & Jannah, 2024)

III. Research Method

1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A qualitative approach is chosen as it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the Tourism Ambassador Competition in empowering the younger generation and its impact on the tourism sector and economic revitalization in Lebak Regency. The case study method is used to explore the phenomenon occurring in Lebak Regency in greater detail and focus, providing a holistic perspective on the

implementation of the Tourism Ambassador Competition. This research examines various aspects related to the competition, including its implementation, and its impact on participants as well as the surrounding community. Thus, the research design aims to provide a comprehensive picture of how this competition contributes to the growth of the tourism sector and the local economy.

2. Location and Subjects

This study is conducted in Lebak Regency, Banten Province, a region with significant natural and cultural tourism potential. Lebak Regency is selected as the research site because it boasts abundant natural beauty and cultural diversity that serve as tourist attractions, yet it still faces challenges in the development and promotion of its tourism sector (Apriyani et al., 2021).

The selection of this location is also based on the fact that Lebak Regency has consistently implemented the Tourism Ambassador Competition as part of its youth empowerment and tourism development strategy. The competition provides a concrete and ongoing program that reflects the local government's efforts to involve young people in promoting regional tourism. Therefore, it offers a relevant and rich context to study how structured youth-based initiatives can contribute to the tourism sector and stimulate local economic growth.

The subjects in this study include key stakeholders directly involved in the Tourism Ambassador Competition, namely:

- Competition organizers,
- Youth participants (Tourism Ambassadors),
- Local tourism stakeholders (government and community), and
- Local residents and business actors affected by tourism development.

These subjects were chosen purposively to gather diverse perspectives on the implementation, outcomes, and broader impacts of the Tourism Ambassador Competition on both youth empowerment and tourism-based economic revitalization in Lebak Regency.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study is conducted using multiple techniques:

a. Interviews

Interviews are conducted with Tourism Ambassador Competition participants, competition organizers, local tourism stakeholders, and the surrounding community at tourism destinations. Data were collected over a three-month period from January to March 2025 using interviews and participant observation. A total of 20 informants were

interviewed, consisting of 5 competition organizers, 8 Tourism Ambassador participants, 4 local tourism stakeholders (including government representatives), and 3 local business actors or community members affected by tourism promotion. The goal of these interviews is to explore their perceptions, experiences, and perspectives regarding the Tourism Ambassador Competition and its impact on the tourism sector and local economy (Adi Permadi et al., 2018).

b. Participant Observation

The researcher conducts observations of the Tourism Ambassador Competition, from the selection phase to the final event. This observation aims to understand the dynamics of the competition, how participants interact with the community and tourism destinations, and how the competition contributes to tourism promotion (Sejati, 2019).

4. Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The first step involves transcribing the interviews and documenting the observations. Next, the researcher will identify key themes that emerge from the interview and observation data (Byrne, 2022), such as:

- The role of the younger generation in the tourism sector,
- The impact of the competition on tourism promotion, and
- The contribution of the competition to local economic growth.

Once the main themes are identified, the data will be classified into relevant categories, such as social, economic, and cultural impacts of the Tourism Ambassador Competition. The researcher will then draw conclusions regarding the competition's influence on youth empowerment, the tourism sector, and economic revitalization in Lebak Regency. The analysis results will be presented in a descriptive format, including interpretations of key findings.

5. Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered:

a. Time Constraints

This research is conducted within a specific timeframe during the implementation of the Tourism Ambassador Competition and a few months afterward. As a result, the long-term impact of this competition on the tourism sector and the local economy may not be fully captured.

b. Geographical Focus

This study focuses solely on Lebak Regency, meaning that the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other regions with different tourism characteristics.

c. Limited Subjects

Although this study includes various subjects involved in the Tourism Ambassador Competition, the number of interviewees is limited to individuals directly participating in the competition and tourism stakeholders in Lebak Regency. Thus, the research findings primarily reflect the perspectives of those directly engaged in the competition and local tourism sector.

IV. Results and Analysis

This study aims to explore the impact of the Tourism Ambassador Competition on youth empowerment, tourism sector growth, and economic revitalization in Lebak Regency. Based on the previously described research methods, data collected through interviews and observations have been processed to provide a clearer picture of the competition's effects on these sectors. This section presents and discusses the research findings in detail to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

1. Presentation of Results

The findings of this study reveal several key insights regarding the role of the Tourism Ambassador Competition in youth empowerment and its impact on the tourism sector and local economy in Lebak Regency. The main findings are as follows:

a. Interview Findings

The following are excerpts from interviews conducted with Tourism Ambassador participants, competition organizers, and the local community regarding the Tourism Ambassador Competition in Lebak Regency:

"I was very excited to participate in this selection process. The selection stages were quite rigorous, including administrative selection, cultural and tourism knowledge tests, and public speaking assessments. There was also an evaluation of personality and interpersonal skills. This was a very valuable and challenging experience for me."
(Tourism Ambassador participant)

"I feel much more confident when speaking in front of large audiences. Additionally, I have gained extensive knowledge about the cultural and tourism wealth of Lebak Regency. This competition has significantly enhanced my personal development and has greatly contributed to promoting tourism in Lebak". (Tourism Ambassador participant)

"The selection process was conducted rigorously and transparently. We wanted to ensure that the selected participants truly possess extensive knowledge about local tourism and

culture. We also provided intensive training for finalists to prepare them to become competent ambassadors.” (Competition organizer)

“Our primary goal is to find young individuals who can professionally promote Lebak Regency’s tourism. We want them to be the face of the region’s tourism and attract more visitors”. (Competition organizer)

“I strongly support this competition as it helps introduce Lebak Regency to a wider audience. Many young people have become more aware of the importance of preserving our local culture and natural beauty.” (Local community member)

“I have experienced positive effects, as more tourists have visited following the promotion by the Tourism Ambassadors. My culinary business has gained more recognition, and my revenue has increased. I hope this initiative continues in the future.” (Local community member)

b. The Role of the Tourism Ambassador Competition in Youth Empowerment

Based on interviews with competition participants, organizers, and local community members, the Tourism Ambassador Competition in Lebak Regency has demonstrated a positive impact on youth empowerment. Participants showed significant improvement in their knowledge of tourism, communication skills, and appreciation for local culture. This competition serves not only as a platform for promoting tourism but also as a catalyst for social change, inspiring young individuals to take an active role in preserving natural and cultural heritage. Moreover, it provides participants with personal and professional development opportunities through various training programs organized by the competition committee. These training sessions cover essential skills such as public speaking, social media marketing for tourism promotion, and tourism destination management. Several participants even reported actively engaging in tourism promotion and management initiatives after taking part in the competition. Below are examples of Tourism Ambassador activities in Lebak Regency:

Figure 1. Grand Final of the Lebak Regency Tourism Ambassador Competition



(Source: bantenekspos.com)

Figure 2. Tourism Ambassadors Attending the Farmers' Market Exhibition



(Source: jaguarnews.com)

c. Impact of the Competition on Tourism Sector Growth

One of the key findings of this study is the increased awareness among young people about Lebak Regency's tourism potential. Before the competition, many local residents were unaware of the tourism destinations in their own region. However, through the promotion efforts of Tourism Ambassadors and competition participants, several local attractions have gained recognition among visitors from outside the region.

The following table outlines the tourism destinations highlighted during the Tourism Ambassador Competition in Lebak Regency:

Table 1. Tourism Destinations in Lebak Regency

No	Type of Tourism	Number of Destinations
1.	Natural Tourism	160
2.	Man-Made Tourism	35
3.	Cultural Tourism	25
4.	Religious Tourism	17
Total		237

(Source: lebakunique.co.id, 2025)

Based on Table 1, the tourism destinations discussed during the Tourism Ambassador Competition in Lebak Regency are categorized into four types is Natural tourism (160 destinations), Man-made tourism (35 destinations), Cultural tourism (25 destinations), and Religious tourism (17 destinations). The competition has also positively influenced the number of visitors to tourism destinations in Lebak Regency. According to data collected from local tourism operators and tourism site managers, the number of tourists visiting Lebak Regency increased after the Tourism Ambassador Competition was held. This indicates that the competition contributes to more effective tourism promotion and attracts more tourists. Furthermore, many participants continued their involvement in promoting tourism through social media content such as photographs, videos, and articles showcasing Lebak Regency's natural beauty and cultural richness. Additionally, Tourism Ambassadors collaborated with local tourism managers and the regional government to organize events involving both the local community and tourists. For example, several ambassadors played a role in organizing local cultural festivals to attract visitors and highlight Lebak Regency's cultural heritage.

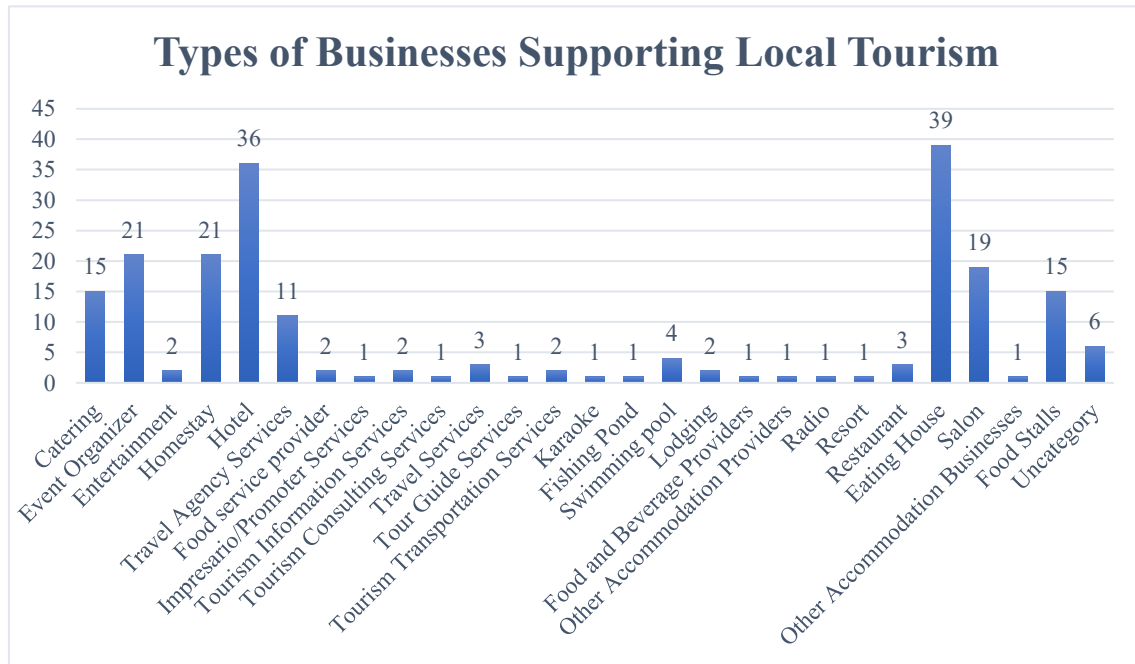
d. Contribution to Local Economic Revitalization

The Tourism Ambassador Competition has also contributed to economic revitalization in Lebak Regency. Based on interviews with tourism entrepreneurs and local community members, the competition has stimulated the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) related to tourism, such as culinary businesses, souvenir shops, and transportation services.

In this context, tourism entrepreneurs refer to local business actors who operate within the tourism value chain. These include individuals or groups who manage homestays, food stalls, travel and transportation services, souvenir production, event organizing, as well as cultural performance services. They are typically community members or youth groups who capitalize on the tourism potential of Lebak Regency by offering services and products tailored to tourist needs.

Many of these local entrepreneurs reported an increase in revenue and demand after Lebak's tourism destinations gained broader recognition due to promotional efforts by the Tourism Ambassadors. The increased visibility of local destinations has attracted more visitors, creating a multiplier effect on local spending and demand for tourism-related products and services. The following diagram presents the types of businesses supporting the local tourism sector:

Figure 3. Types of Businesses Supporting Local Tourism



(source: lebakunique.co.id/data-kepariwisataan, 2025)

According to Figure 3, there are 27 types of businesses supporting the local tourism industry, including Catering services; Event organizers; Entertainment services; Homestays and hotels; Travel agencies; Food and beverage providers; Tourism information services; Cultural promotion agencies; Transportation services; Resorts and restaurants. These findings indicate that the Tourism Ambassador Competition plays a crucial role in stimulating economic opportunities and enhancing tourism-related businesses in Lebak Regency.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the Tourism Ambassador Competition plays a crucial role in strengthening the tourism sector and revitalizing the local economy through youth empowerment. One of the most notable aspects is the increased awareness and involvement of young people in the tourism sector. As tourism promotion ambassadors, competition participants not only receive training on tourism knowledge,

but also gain opportunities to develop communication skills, which are essential in the digital era. The utilization of social media as a promotional tool has proven to be highly effective, considering that the young participants are already proficient in using digital platforms (Xiang & Gretzel, 2020). The following table presents the monthly domestic tourist arrivals in Lebak Regency, based on data from the Lebak Regency Department of Culture and Tourism.

Figure 4. Number of Domestic Tourist Visits in Lebak Regency

Bulan	Jumlah Kunjungan Wisatawan Nusantara Menurut Bulan di Kabupaten Lebak (jiwa)	
	2022	2023
Januari	65.123	74.658
Februari	41.083	52.411
Maret	70.900	52.719
April	65.048	306.560
Mei	365.697	70.813
Juni	67.715	76.350
Juli	50.181	51.838
Agustus	30.442	51.100
September	30.509	51.436
Oktober	35.959	43.411
November	28.953	51.830
Desember	56.731	129.104
Jumlah	908.341	1.012.230

Source: Department of Culture and Tourism, Lebak Regency 2025

Based on Figure 4, there was an increase in the number of domestic tourist visits in several months. In January 2022, there were 62,123 visitors, which increased to 74,568 visitors in 2023. In February 2022, the number of visitors was 41,083, rising to 52,411 in 2023. In March 2022, the number of visitors was 70,900, but it decreased to 52,719 in 2023. In April 2022, there were 65,048 visitors, experiencing a significant increase to 306,560 visitors in 2023. In May 2022, the number of visitors was 365,697, but it declined to 70,813 in 2023. In June 2022, there were 67,715 visitors, increasing to 76,350 in 2023. In July 2022, the number of visitors was 50,181, rising to 51,838 in 2023. In August 2022, there were 30,442 visitors, increasing to 51,100 in 2023. In September 2022, the number of visitors was 30,509, rising to 51,436 in 2023. In October 2022, there were 35,959 visitors, which increased to 43,411 in 2023. In November 2022, the number of visitors was 28,953, rising to 51,830 in 2023. In December 2022, there were 56,731 visitors, increasing significantly to 129,104 in 2023.

The total number of domestic tourist visits in Lebak Regency in 2022 was 908,341, which increased in 2023 to a total of 1,012,230 visits. One of the contributing factors to this increase was the active role of Lebak Regency's tourism ambassadors in promoting the region's tourism sector.

Figure 5. Number of International Tourist Visits in Lebak Regency

Bulan	Jumlah Kunjungan Wisatawan Mancanegara Menurut Bulan di Kabupaten Lebak (jiwa)	
	2022	2023
Januari	39	138
Februari	67	164
Maret	40	125
April	-	58
Mei	33	61
Juni	-	34
Juli	54	45
Agustus	78	57
September	46	49
Oktober	54	81
November	61	53
Desember	79	3
Jumlah	551	868

Source: Department of Culture and Tourism, Lebak Regency 2025

Based on Figure 5, there was an increase in the number of international tourist visits in several months. In January 2022, there were 39 visitors, which increased to 138 visitors in 2023. In February 2022, the number of visitors was 67, rising to 164 in 2023. In March 2022, there were 40 visitors, increasing to 125 in 2023. In April 2022, there were no recorded international tourist visits, but this number increased to 58 visitors in 2023. In May 2022, there were 33 visitors, which increased to 61 in 2023. In June 2022, no international tourist visits were recorded, but the number increased to 34 visitors in 2023. In July 2022, the number of visitors was 54, but it declined to 45 in 2023. In August 2022, there were 78 visitors, decreasing to 57 in 2023. In September 2022, the number of visitors was 46, rising to 49 in 2023. In October 2022, there were 54 visitors, increasing to 81 in 2023. In November 2022, the number of visitors was 81, rising to 83 in 2023. In December 2022, there were 79 visitors, experiencing a slight decline to 76 in 2023. The total number of international tourist visits in Lebak Regency in 2022 was 551, which increased to 868 visits in 2023. One of the contributing factors to this increase was the active role of Lebak Regency's tourism ambassadors in promoting the region's tourism sector.

The growth of the tourism sector in Lebak Regency is reflected not only in the increasing number of tourists but also in the expansion of small businesses based on tourism. This development demonstrates that tourism can serve as a key driver in creating a new economy rooted in local potential (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). As more businesses emerge, local communities can directly benefit from the tourism sector, ultimately improving their overall well-being.

However, despite the numerous positive impacts of the Tourism Ambassador competition, several challenges remain. One significant issue is the lack of adequate infrastructure in certain tourist destinations, which may hinder visitor comfort. Therefore, the development of infrastructure and tourism facilities is crucial to supporting sustainable growth in the tourism sector.

3. Recommendations

Based on the results and discussion presented, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of the Tourism Ambassador competition and the development of the tourism sector in Lebak Regency:

a. Improvement of Tourism Infrastructure and Facilities

The local government should enhance infrastructure and facilities at existing tourist destinations, including access roads, parking areas, as well as sanitation and hygiene facilities. These improvements will support visitor comfort and encourage longer stays in Lebak Regency.

b. Continuous Training and Empowerment for the Younger Generation

The Tourism Ambassador competition should be followed by continuous training programs to further develop participants' skills in managing and promoting the tourism sector. Additionally, youth empowerment in tourism should not be limited to the competition itself but should involve them in future tourism planning and destination management.

c. Collaboration with the Private Sector

Collaboration between the local government and the private sector, particularly tourism stakeholders, needs to be strengthened. This includes providing affordable accommodation, joint promotional efforts, and developing attractive tourism products. Local creative industry players should also be involved in promoting culture- and nature-based tourism. In this effort, young tourism ambassadors serve as key mobilizers who connect digital-savvy tourists with local destinations. With their digital literacy, content creation skills, and peer influence, they effectively promote local tourism to fellow young travelers who seek experience-based tourism and are active online (Xiang & Gretzel,

2020). Through the Tourism Ambassador Competition, these youth actors are empowered to collaborate with private tourism businesses such as travel startups or eco-tourism operators as both promoters and co-creators of innovative tourism experiences. Strengthening this synergy not only enhances destination branding and expands tourism reach, but also opens up inclusive economic opportunities, particularly for the younger generation and local communities.

d. Utilization of Technology for Tourism Promotion

Digital technology, especially social media, should be maximized to promote tourist destinations. Tourism Ambassadors participating in the competition can serve as pioneers in creating engaging and creative content for potential visitors. The local government can provide training for the community on how to utilize digital platforms to enhance the appeal of tourism in Lebak Regency.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Tourism Ambassador competition in Lebak Regency has a significant impact on youth empowerment, the growth of the tourism sector, and the revitalization of the local economy. The key conclusions of this research are as follows:

a. Youth Empowerment

The Tourism Ambassador competition plays a crucial role in developing the potential of young people in Lebak Regency. Participants not only gain knowledge about the tourism sector but also acquire essential skills such as communication, leadership, and an understanding of cultural and environmental preservation. This competition provides a platform for young people to actively participate in promoting local tourism and to serve as change agents who inspire their peers to appreciate and support local potential.

b. Growth of the Tourism Sector

The Tourism Ambassador competition has been proven to increase public awareness, both locally and beyond, of the tourism potential in Lebak Regency. Participants actively promote tourist destinations through social media and other activities, contributing to the rise in the number of visitors to the region. Additionally, the events held during the competition help showcase the natural beauty and cultural richness of Lebak Regency to both domestic and international tourists.

c. Contribution to Local Economic Revitalization

The growth of the tourism sector driven by the Tourism Ambassador competition has had a positive impact on local economic revitalization. The expansion of small and

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in tourism-related industries—such as culinary businesses, souvenir production, and tour guide services—has created new job opportunities for the local community. This, in turn, directly contributes to increasing local income and has a positive effect on the overall economy of Lebak Regency.

Overall, the Tourism Ambassador competition not only serves as a platform for selecting tourism ambassadors but also as an effective strategy to raise awareness, engagement, and youth empowerment in the development of the tourism sector and the revitalization of the local economy in Lebak Regency. Therefore, this competition could serve as a model for other regions seeking to leverage their tourism potential to support community-based economic development.

However, to maximize the impact of this competition, further support is needed in terms of tourism infrastructure development, sustainable youth empowerment, and stronger collaboration between local governments, communities, and the private sector. With these measures, the tourism sector in Lebak Regency has the potential to grow significantly and provide greater benefits to the local economy and its people.

VI. References

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