



IDENTIFICATION OF ECONOMIC POTENTIAL IN SOKARAJA, BANYUMAS

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Abstract. This research aims to identify the economic potential in the Sokaraja District and map the economic potential of the Sokaraja District so that the MSMEs centers in the Sokaraja District and the areas where these MSMEs are located can be identified. This research was conducted in the Sokaraja District, Banyumas Regency. The location was selected based on the consideration that the Sokaraja District has economic potential that can support the development of Banyumas Regency tourism. The research method used in this study was qualitative. This study used observation and interviews to obtain the necessary data and information. Overall, Sokaraja has strong economic potential, but a single regional development vision hasn't fully integrated it. Large-scale industry is strong, but it hasn't been matched by growth in medium-sized industries and cooperatives. Local trade is active but hasn't been directed toward the tourism sector. Despite its comprehensiveness, the creative sector hasn't fully utilized the financial infrastructure. Similarly, the tourism sector has enormous potential but hasn't been developed in a planned manner.

Keywords: Economic Potential, MSMEs, qualitative, financial infrastructure

1. Introduction

A keyway to help regional economies grow is to develop leading sectors. We need to provide sectors like tourism, agriculture, and the creative industry with more power so they can create jobs and raise community incomes. Vandiana et al (1) say that investing in these areas is important because it will make natural resources more useful and attract tourists and businesspeople to the area (1). Developing leading sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and the creative economy is a key strategy for driving regional economic growth (2). A study in Bontolempangan District shows that integrating tourism potential with agricultural resources through the concept of agritourism can promote sustainable regional economic development (3).

Kolesnikova et al (4) also agree with this. They emphasize building an innovation-based economy, where figuring out and managing the innovation potential of a region are important factors in local economic growth. Moreover, the cultivation of high-quality human resources is a fundamental catalyst for equitable economic growth. Jia's research demonstrates a strong correlation between human resource development and balanced regional economic growth, emphasizing the relevance of workforce quality and structure for economic advancement (5). (6) found that in low- and middle-income countries, improvements in infrastructure, effective public policies, and specialized human skills have a substantial impact on economic growth.

Subsequently, the government, communities, and the business sector need to work together to establish empowerment initiatives that can boost the economy in the area (7). Mapping economic potential is critical to promoting targeted economic development within a region. Finding out what the regional economy can do is the first step in mapping its potential.



The next step is to map the regional economy's potential. Natural resources, human resources, capital, and technologies that help people use natural and human resources are all part of a region's economic potential. The combination of these three potentials makes regional economic mapping and development possible. Regions can use their natural resources wisely, with skilled workers and the right technologies, to grow economically and sustainably. It is very important to know what resources are available and how to make the most of them in the context of regional development to map out economic potential.

Research by (8) underscores the necessity for fundamental data concerning resource potential to develop contextually suitable strategies. The multidimensional scaling analysis utilized in this study demonstrates the significance of a comprehensive approach to assessing the state and sustainability index of local economic resources. This conclusion is in line with what (9) said about zoning resource potential, which also shows how important resource mapping is for planning and controlling economic potential in a certain area.

One of the developing areas in the region, Sokaraja, aims to contribute to economic growth. Sokaraja is known as a developing region. (10) noted that active collaboration between academics, business actors, government, communities, and the media has made a significant contribution to encouraging innovation in the Sokaraja District, particularly in rural areas.

Sokaraja District is a small part of Banyumas Regency in Central Java Province. A famous product from Sokaraja is Soto Sokaraja, one of the iconic culinary specialties of Banyumas Regency (11). Other products that are developing include Getuk Goreng (fried getuk), and Batik Sokaraja, which are all distinctive things that draw travelers to Banyumas Regency's tourist attractions. Sokaraja District is one of the tourism buffer zones in Banyumas Regency. Sokaraja District is in a favorable spot because it is adjacent to Purwokerto City, which is the administrative capital of Banyumas Regency. Sokaraja District is also a major road to other areas. Finding out what the Sokaraja District can do economically will help it grow in a way that is both targeted and long-lasting.

By figuring out a region's economic potential, it may gain a clear picture of the resources and opportunities that are already there. This makes it possible to create focused development plans. To maximize economic growth in the Sokaraja District, its economic potential must be mapped. Such an effort will help the economy grow in a way that is both forward-looking and sustainable.

2. Methods

This study utilizes the field of development economics to analyze the economic prospects and advancement of tourism. The study was carried out in the Sokaraja District of Banyumas Regency. The site was chosen because the Sokaraja District is a tourism buffer zone for Banyumas Regency and has economic potential that can help tourism grow there. This study employs a qualitative research methodology.

Qualitative research prioritizes the observation of occurrences, concentrating on their essence and significance. Qualitative research emphasizes the methodology and interpretation of findings. This method is necessary to gain deep insights and understand complex phenomena (12). This suggested research aims to elucidate facts or phenomena pertaining to the economic potential of the Sokaraja District in connection with the tourism buffer zone. This suggested research would employ observation and interviews to gather essential data and information, in accordance with the principles of qualitative research methodology.

The conceptual framework for the implementation method encompasses the following approaches:

- a. Comprehensive approach: a kind of planning that looks at different aspects that are already in place and adjusts them to fit the needs of the design process.
- b. An integrated strategy is one that brings together different interests or groups that are involved in planning and carrying out a project. During the planning phase, stakeholders participate in conversations to improve the design's quality. The stakeholders are MSMEs in Sokaraja District, regional stakeholders in Sokaraja District, the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency of Banyumas Regency, the Department of Manpower, Cooperatives, and Small and Medium Enterprises, the Department of Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism of Banyumas Regency, and other research sources that are relevant. We will hold focus group discussions (FGDs) to bring together different interests linked to the research.
- c. The realistic approach is a method that considers both design and current conditions.

By employing this method, researchers can enhance their understanding of the phenomenon they study and offer more practical recommendations.

3. Results And Discussion

1.1. Location and Population Aspects

Sokaraja District is divided into 18 villages, with a total area of 30.28 km². The villages in Sokaraja District include Karangrau Village, Karangnanas Village, Wiradadi Village, Karangkedawung Village, Sokaraja Kulon Village, Pamijen Village, Kedondong Village, Sokaraja Lor Village, Karangduren Village, Lemberang Village, Banjaranyar Village, Jompo Kulon Village, Banjarsari Kidul Village, Klahang Village, Sokaraja Wetan Village, Sokaraja Kidul Village, Sokaraja Tengah Village, and Kalikidang Village. Figure 1 shows a map of the Sokaraja District.

On the population side, the following Table 1 shows data on population, population distribution, and population density of Sokaraja District in 2023.

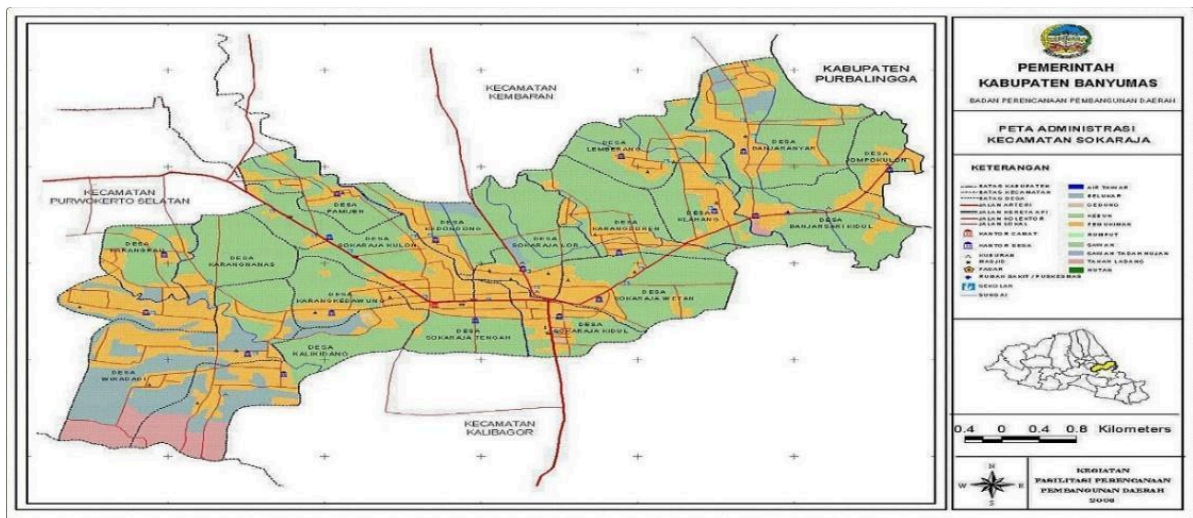


Figure 1. Map of Sokaraja District
Source: Banyumas Regency Government, 2025



Table 1. Population Aspects of Sokaraja District in 2023

Village	Population (Person)	Population Distribution (%)	Population Density (Person Per Km ²)
Kalikidang	5,943	6.5	2,443.30
Sokaraja Tengah	6,843	7.4	3,695.30
Sokaraja Kidul	4,991	5.4	3,877.70
Sokaraja Wetan	4,447	4.8	2,429.50
Klahang	4,959	5.4	3,649.00
Banjarsari Kidul	3,751	4.1	2,197.30
Jompo Kulon	1,937	2.1	2,304.60
Banjaranyar	5,352	5.8	2,005.30
Lemberang	3,681	4.0	1,988.90
Kedungduren	5,195	5.6	2,954.70
Sokaraja Lor	4,163	4.5	2,538.30
Kedondong	3,745	4.1	4,007.50
Pamijen	3,709	4.0	3,764.00
Sokaraja Kulon	8,333	9.1	4,437.20
Karangkedawung	3,031	3.3	3,975.60
Wiradadi	6,910	7.5	2,535.10
Karangnanas	10,768	11.7	3,695.90
Karangrau	4,230	4.6	4,940.40

Source: BPS Banyumas Regency, 2025

1.2. Historical and Cultural Aspects of Sokaraja

Sokaraja, a district in Banyumas Regency, Central Java, plays a crucial role in the development of local culture and history. This area is known as one of the centers of trade and culture in Banyumas, with historical traces dating back to the Dutch colonial period. Sokaraja witnessed various historical events that shaped the identity and character of the surrounding community. Over time, Sokaraja has developed into a region that blends traditional values and modernity, making it a unique and intriguing place.

During the Dutch colonial period, Sokaraja developed into one of Banyumas' economic centers. The construction of the post road (De Grote Postweg) by Governor General Herman Willem Daendels in the early 19th century accelerated the region's economic growth. Sokaraja became an important trading center, particularly for agricultural products such as coffee, sugar, and spices. Sokaraja saw the construction of many colonial buildings during this period, some of which still stand today.

Sokaraja also played a crucial role in Indonesia's struggle for independence. During the Japanese occupation and the revolution for independence, this region served as a stronghold of popular resistance. Many national heroes from Banyumas who fought against colonial rule hailed from this region. Various monuments and historical sites in Sokaraja immortalize their struggles.

Besides being a trading center, Sokaraja is also known for its distinctive culinary traditions, one of which is Sokaraja soto. This dish is not only popular among locals but also a culinary tourist attraction for visitors from various regions. These culinary traditions have been passed down from generation to generation, reflecting the rich culture and local wisdom of Sokaraja.

Culturally, Sokaraja boasts a variety of traditional arts that are still preserved to this day, such as shadow puppetry, the lengger dance, and the kuda lumping (horse dance). These arts not only provide entertainment for the community but also serve as a means of preserving

cultural values. The government and local community actively organize various cultural events and festivals to promote and preserve traditional arts.



Figure 2. Ferry transportation on the Serayu River
Source: Sokaraja Commercial City History Study, 2023

In the context of modern development, Sokaraja continues to experience rapid infrastructure and economic growth. However, maintaining a balance between development and preserving historical values remains a top priority. With various supportive programs and policies, Sokaraja is expected to continue to develop as a region that is not only economically advanced but also rich in historical and cultural values.

1.3. Economic Potential of Sokaraja District

Sokaraja District, one of 27 districts in Banyumas Regency, enjoys a strategic economic position, particularly considering its location on the connecting route between Purwokerto City and other regencies/districts, such as Purbalingga and Kalibagor. This geographic location not only strengthens its function as a transit and distribution area but also opens significant opportunities for the development of economic sectors more integrated with tourism.

From an industrial perspective, Sokaraja demonstrates quite striking strength. As many as 16.67% of large industries in Banyumas Regency are in this area, making it one of the region's important centers of heavy industry or manufacturing. The presence of medium-sized industries is also quite significant (8.97%), although they remain low (1.82%). This situation indicates that the industrial structure in Sokaraja tends to be imbalanced and relies heavily on large industries, without adequate support from the medium-sized industry sector, which should act as a bridge between small and large industries. This scenario indicates the need to strengthen the medium-sized industry ecosystem based on local potential, particularly to foster entrepreneurship and creative industries that can support tourism (Table 2).

Table 2 also shows that in terms of trade and markets, Sokaraja District has 7.69% of the total public markets in Banyumas, indicating a strong and active traditional economic dynamic. However, supermarkets account for only 5.02% of the total, and there are no specialized markets at all, such as souvenir markets, batik markets, or tourist markets. This reflects Sokaraja's untapped potential as a thematic trade center that can support the tourism sector. However, with its strong cultural identity, such as Banyumasan batik, distinctive culinary delights (Soto Sokaraja, fried getuk), and local crafts, Sokaraja has all the prerequisites to become a thematic market area based on culture and tourism.



The financial sector shows intriguing dynamics. The number of Rural Credit Banks (BPR) reached 12.84%, indicating the dominance of microfinance institutions in Sokaraja. These institutions could be a significant force in supporting financing for small businesses, MSMEs, and the informal economy, which are the backbone of the local economy. However, the number of active cooperatives is only 5.60%, reflecting the still weak role of the community's collective economy in supporting community-based production and distribution systems. Going forward, rural banks (BPR) and cooperatives can work together to build an inclusive financial system and more equitable access to financing, especially for local economic actors targeting the tourism sector.

Table 2. Contribution of Sokaraja District to Supporting the Economy of Banyumas Regency

Supporting Facilities for Economic Activities	Banyumas Regency	Sokaraja District
The number of Large Industries	6	16.67%
The number of Medium Industries	78	8.97%
The number of Small Industries	44,201	1.82%
Number of Supermarkets	219	5.02%
The number of Public Markets	26	7.69%
The number of Special Markets	2	0.00%
Number of Active Cooperatives	375	5.60%
Number of Government Commercial Banks	87	6.90%
Number of Private Commercial Banks	40	7.50%
Number of People's Rural Banks (BPR)	109	12.84%
Starred Hotel	16	6.25%
Non-starred Hotel, Villa, Homestay and others	416	4.57%

Source: BPS Banyumas Regency, 2025, processed data

From a tourism perspective, data shows that the number of star-rated hotels in Sokaraja is only 6.25%, and non-star-rated accommodations such as homestays and villas are only 4.57%. These low figures can be an early indication that Sokaraja is not yet fully functioning as a tourism support area. Generally, tourists heading to Banyumas Regency and the surrounding area utilize hotel accommodations in the urban area of Purwokerto. With its strategic location as access to prime destinations like Baturraden and other tourist destinations in Purbalingga Regency, along with its rich culinary heritage and distinctive local traditions, Sokaraja has significant potential to be developed as a tourist transit area, souvenir center, or even a cultural and culinary tourism village.

Despite Sokaraja's robust economic potential, a unified regional development vision has yet to fully incorporate it. While Sokaraja boasts a robust, large-scale industry, the growth of medium-sized and cooperative industries has not kept pace. Local trade is active but has not been directed towards the tourism sector. Financial infrastructure is quite comprehensive but has not been fully utilized to empower the creative sector. Similarly, the tourism sector has enormous potential but has not been developed in a planned manner. Therefore, the development of the Sokaraja District as a buffer zone for Banyumas tourism needs to be directed towards an integrated economic approach, combining strengthening the creative industry, revitalizing local trade, developing thematic markets, establishing community-based tourism zones, and financial inclusion based on cooperatives and rural banks (BPR). This approach will not only increase local economic competitiveness but also establish Sokaraja as an active and productive buffer zone, sustainably supporting tourism in Banyumas Regency. Specifically, in terms of the distribution of small-scale industries, the data in Table 3 below shows the contribution of the number of villages concentrated in micro and small industries.



Sokaraja District demonstrates significant diversity and strength in the micro and small industry sector in Banyumas Regency. Several villages host a variety of small businesses, their contribution proportions indicating a competitive position in multiple sub-sectors. Overall, industries based on local skills, culture, and sectors that have the potential to support regional tourism development are Sokaraja's strengths.

Table 3. Number of Villages According to the Existence and Type of Micro/Small Industries in Banyumas Regency

Types of Small and Micro Industries	Banyumas	Sokaraja Market Share
Leather industry, leather goods, and footwear	11	0.00%
Wood furniture industry, rattan/bamboo, plastic, metal	304	4.93%
Metal goods industry, not machinery and the Equipment	214	6.54%
Textile industry	55	7.27%
Clothing Industry	250	6.80%
Industry of Non -Metal/Pottery/Ceramic/Brick Industry	140	7.14%
Wood industry, wooden goods, woven goods from bamboo, rattan, and others	210	4.29%
Food Industry	298	6.04%
Beverage industry	290	5.17%
Tobacco processing industry	5	0.00%
Paper industry and paper goods	7	0.00%
Recording Media Printing and Reproduction Industry	159	6.92%
Other transportation equipment industry	2	0.00%
Craft industry and other	49	6.12%
Machine and Equipment Repair and Installation	104	7.69%
Other industries	20	5.00%

Source: BPS Banyumas Regency, 2025, processed data

4. Conclusion

Sokaraja District, situated in Banyumas Regency, Central Java, encompasses an area of 30.28 km² and consists of 18 administrative villages. Its strategic location between Purwokerto, Purbalingga, and Kalibagor has positioned the district as an important transit and distribution hub within the regional economy. Historically, Sokaraja has played a vital role as both a center of trade and culture, particularly during the Dutch colonial era, when the construction of De Grote Postweg accelerated economic activities in agricultural commodities such as coffee, sugar, and spices. Moreover, Sokaraja was a notable site of resistance during the independence struggle, while at the same time maintaining rich cultural traditions that continue to shape local identity, including wayang, lengger dance, kuda lumping, and culinary icons such as Soto Sokaraja and getuk goreng.

In terms of economic structure, Sokaraja demonstrates considerable industrial capacity, with 16.67% of Banyumas' large-scale industries concentrated in the area. However, the dominance of large industries is not accompanied by adequate development of medium and small-scale industries, creating an imbalance in the local industrial ecosystem. Trade activities are relatively strong, with the district hosting 7.69% of traditional markets in Banyumas, yet the absence of specialized or thematic markets indicates untapped potential to integrate cultural identity with economic activities. Similarly, while the financial sector is supported by the presence of Rural Credit Banks (BPR), which dominate microfinance provision, the limited role of cooperatives constrains collective economic initiatives and broader financial inclusion for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).



The tourism sector in Sokaraja remains underdeveloped despite its strategic geographic and cultural advantages. With only 6.25% of star-rated hotels and 4.57% of non-star accommodations, the district largely functions as a transit area rather than a tourism destination. This condition underscores the need for integrated development strategies that combine the strengthening of creative industries, the revitalization of local trade, and the establishment of community-based cultural and culinary tourism zones. By adopting such an approach, Sokaraja could enhance its role as a sustainable buffer zone for regional tourism, particularly in relation to key destinations such as Baturraden, while maintaining a balance between modernization and the preservation of historical and cultural heritage.

5. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank LPPM Jenderal Soedirman University for funding our research through the Riset Dasar Unggulan (RDU) scheme approved in the agreement” Kontrak Pelaksanaan Program Penelitian Riset Dasar Unsoed Tahun Anggaran 2025 Nomor: 14.275/UN23.34/PT.01/V/2025.

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