

Community Participation in the Development of Ecotourism: A Case Study in Tambaksari Village, East Java Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the research was to identify the community participation in the development of ecotourism in Tambaksari Village, East Java Indonesia. Results showed that there were obstacles of community participation in ecotourism development. The fundamental obstacles included community participation from planning, decision making and implementation stages. Most of the villagers in Tambaksari were not yet involved in the planning of ecotourism. There were only few villagers involved in the decision-making process. Moreover, not all villagers were involved in ecotourism activities. Ecotourism in Tambaksari, however, has been recognized to provide benefits to local community. This research confirms that the development of ecotourism programs is able to promote infrastructure development and increase economic earnings. In term of ecotourism evaluation, this research confirms that the majority of the villagers has been involved in the evaluation of ecotourism activities. Results of the study indicate that community participation in ecotourism development in Tambaksari Village requires better improvement, particularly in the beginning of ecotourism development.

Keywords: ccommunity based-tourism, rural development, resources conservation

INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector is the power of economic development for most developing countries [1]. The development of tourism sector has become the focus of many countries all around the world. The recent trend shows that tourism has become popular industry. World Tourism Organization Global Forecast predicts that by the end of 2020, there would have been as many as 136 million tourists coming to South East Asia countries [2]. Among South East Asia countries, the prospect of tourism in Indonesia is considered prospective. With the total population of 230 million and more than 16,000 islands, Indonesia promises great potential for tourism industry. Indonesia is also blessed with beautiful nature and culture. Each region in Indonesia has its own uniqueness, and such resources would attract people around the world to visit Indonesia [3]. In Indonesia, tourism sector in the past few years has turned itself into a sector which presents and brings agendas related to natural conservation. These activities become a vehicle to educate people and make them aware of the importance of nature for the human beings [4]. In this regards, ecotourism has been evolved as a form of tourism which aims to enhance natural conservation and support the wealth of the local community. Ecotourism is generally considered a nature-friendly activity and able to support biodiversity conservation [5]. Ecotourism is a form of tourism which emphasizes community participation in its development. At this point, ecotourism can be seen as a concept of sustainable tourism which supports nature preservation and improves community participation in its implementation [6]. There are some important points to consider in order developing ecotourism in developing countries. One of the crucial issues is related to community participation. Scholars point out that community-based tourism involves local people in decision-making processes and in sharing of tourism economic benefits. As such, community-based tourism can help to open new employment, reduce poverty, and provides good effects toward the preservation of the local environment and local culture [7][8][9].

The concept of participation has long been studied since community participation is one of the main prerequisites for the success of the development. Participation is an important aspect in the development processes [8]. Community is the most crucial part, in which the people belonged to the community are the ones who get the positive and the negative effects of tourism development. Community participation helps to guarantee that the interest of local people will be taken into account. Moreover, problems and obstacles in the development can be overcome more easily through community participation. However, in its implementation, there are problems and obstacles caused by numerous factors. It particularly occur in many tourism projects in developing countries [6]. In such a case, the community-based tourism has been promoted in order to enhance

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local community involvement in planning, implementing, creating access to benefits generated from tourism, and evaluating the tourism development process. With good participation and cooperation from the local community, the social, environmental, and economic stability will be achieved much easier [10]. In developing countries, however, such situation is poorly studied.

Tourism in East Java, Indonesia, is characterized by tourism in natural environment setting. Nature-based tourism grows significantly in East Java and local government argues that ecotourism will become the significant key for local community development [3]. Nevertheless, East Java needs some proper planning dealing with community participation in ecotourism implementation and development. This research aim is to demonstrate the implementation of community participation in ecotourism development in Tambaksari Village, East Java, Indonesia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study site

This study was conducted in Tambaksari Village. Administratively, Tambaksari Village belongs to Purwodadi District at Pasuruan Regency, East Java (Figure 1). This village is divided into four areas, each with its own uniqueness. The village is located at the slope of Mt. Arjuno (3,339 m asl.) which makes ecotourism concept becomes the most suitable tourism forms for the villagers to run.

Since 2010, the village has been chosen and developed as an ecotourism pilot project by Yayasan Kaliandra, a local NGO which concerns with environmental conservation and ecotourism development. The initial pilot project was implemented in four village areas, namely *Dusun* Tambak Watu, *Dusun* Ampelsari, *Dusun* Gunung Malang, and *Dusun* Krai.

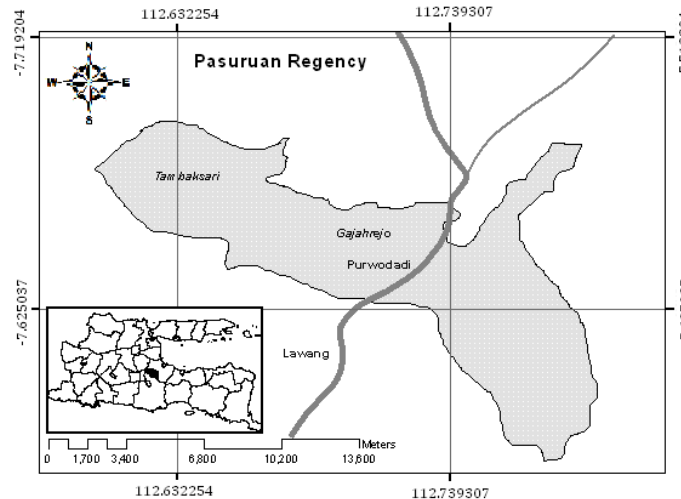


Figure 1. The geographic position of Tambaksari Village to East Java Province, Indonesia

Research Method

Prior to the field survey, researchers first made communication with village's leader, staff of Yayasan Kaliandra and informal leader of Tambaksari Village. Through this communication, researchers built map of research informant target in order to obtain data and information related to the research objectives. Researchers stayed in Tambaksari Village during field survey and participated in some rural activities. Data were collected through interview using questionnaires and observations. Questionnaires were distributed to 170 respondents randomly. Principally, there were five issues addressed in questionnaires, namely, local people involvement in planning stages, participation in decision making, participation in management, benefits of tourism and local involvement in evaluation. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The involvement of the local community in planning stages

In this recent study, there were five indicators to measure the level of participation of local community. The first indicator was the involvement of the local community in planning stage (Figure 2). Based on the data, as many as 49.4% of the respondents stated not all the villagers were involved in the planning stage. This condition was caused by the lack of information and understanding from the local community itself about the

development of ecotourism. Some of the local people thought that involvement in the planning of ecotourism development was not important at all. It is seen from the statements of the respondents which stated that they strongly disagreed with the involvement of the local community in the planning of ecotourism development (6.2%). This situation is similar to the result of a study by Dola and Mijanin a small village in Uganda [8]. They report that the local community at the beginning of tourism program did not understand about tourism. Community had negative responds and saw tourism development with suspicion, worries, and fear. However, as years passed and after they had better understanding on what tourism was all about, their attitude changed. In this study, there were only 27.35% of the respondents agreed with the involvement of the local people in the planning of ecotourism development. Some of the respondents believed that it was important to get them involved in the planning stage as it would deal with the benefit and advantages they would obtain from the development of ecotourism itself. The results of a study by Wight [12] explain how local people have to be involved in the planning, policy and decision making, and in managing the benefit of ecotourism. Mohammadi [13] states that the biggest problem on the planning of ecotourism development lies on the fragmented system and the lack of local community involvement at the planning stage and management process. In Tambaksari Village, however, less of public participation significantly threatens to the sustainability of ecotourism implementation.

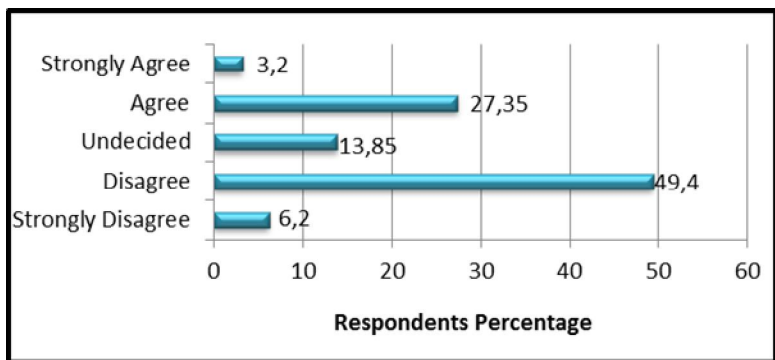


Figure 2. Local community participation in ecotourism planning

Participation level in decision-making process

Local community participation in planning will affect participation in decision making as well. Result of the study showed that the level of participation in decision making were poor (Figure 3). About 51.75% of the respondents stated they were not involved in any decision-making process related to ecotourism planning and development. Local community participation and involvement are limited to some extent. This finding in line with the report written by Dola and Mijan [8] which states that in developing countries, local community participation in tourism decision-making processes is considered poor. Local community is not taken into account in planning, decision-making, and management of the tourism sector [14]. Different status, social gap, and power struggles in decision-making often become the main problem in the community involvement in decision-making processes in developing countries [15]. Recently, however, in some countries involvement of local community has been done by some community representative. The involvement of some people from the local community is considered as a good way in decision-making processes for developing countries.

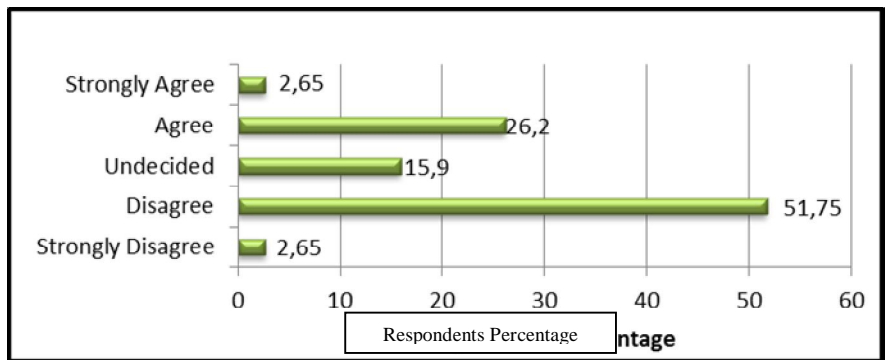


Figure 3. Local community participation in ecotourism decision-making

Local community participation in the management

Local community participation in the management of ecotourism is crucial issues in community-based tourism. The results of the study showed that not all the villagers in Tambaksari were involved in the management and implementation of ecotourism (Fig. 4). About 41.2% of the respondents stated that they were not involved in the ecotourism implementation and management. There were some reasons behind the respond. For instance, some of the respondents cannot participate in homestay programs due to the condition of their homes which were considered inappropriate to be included in home-stay programs. There was also lack of skill to produce goods and tourism souvenir. However, some of the villagers stated that they were involved in the ecotourism activities, in which as many as 35.5% of the respondents agreed on the necessity to get involved in the ecotourism activities in Tambaksari. The involvement of the local people was shown by their participation in providing their houses as a home-stay base for tourists and visitors. Liu [16] stated that making houses into a home-stay facility is a strategy to improve household income of the local community. Home-stay program is one of the ways to support and maintain the development of tourism done by the community independently. The involvement of the local community is also shown by the emergence of local tour guides and people selling the local products.

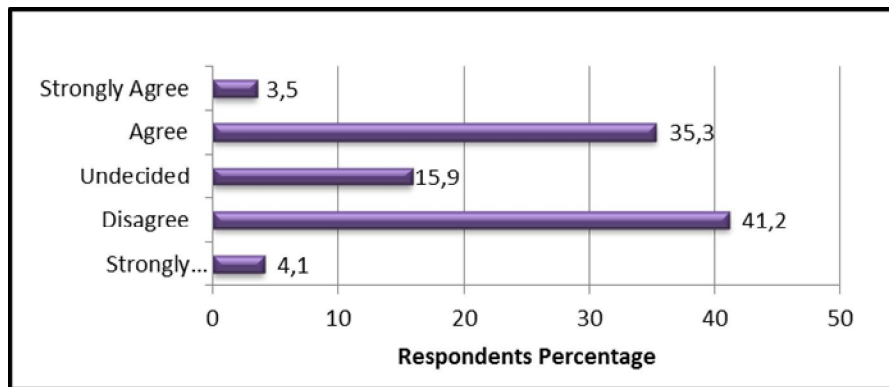


Figure 4. Local community participation in ecotourism implementation

Local community participation in the management and implementation of ecotourism can help to increase the income of the local people themselves. According to Gurung and Seeland [17], the management of ecotourism by local people will support economic development, preserve the environment, and help to promote the culture. In addition, local community participation in the management and implementation of ecotourism will open up employment, increase the income of local people, and bring some other advantages [18][19][5].

Benefits aspects of ecotourism

This present study confirms that community believes ecotourism development provides some benefits (Figure 5). About 47.1% of the respondents thought that they obtained benefits significantly. Some of the respondents, as many as 4.7%, strongly agreed that tourism provides positive contribution to local people. Some of the local people involved in the ecotourism stated that they had felt the benefit of their involvement, which was in the form of some increase in their income. Ecotourism opens up new employment sector and increase income of the local people. Simpson [15] states that local community involvement and participation in tourism will open up new horizon in which those people will appreciate and understand more about the tourism sector. Moreover, as their understanding gets deeper, they will be more involved in the sector and they can get more advantages from their participation. In addition, ecotourism also brings other advantages, such as the improvement of public facilities and infrastructure for the local community to enjoy. According to Tosun [20], as well as World Wildlife Fund (WWF), local community participation is closely related to their livelihood and other benefits for the local people themselves.

The next indicator in this study then deals with the participation of the local community in the evaluation. The results of the study showed that the majority of the villagers had been involved in the evaluation of ecotourism activities (Figure 6) since as many as 37.9% of the respondents claimed that they were involved in the evaluation of the ecotourism development in their village. However, some of the villagers, accounted as many as 25.6% of the respondents, stated that they were not involved in the evaluation of the ecotourism program. The evaluation was conducted based on suggestion and reference from universities cooperating with Tambaksari Village, both Indonesian universities (i.e. Ciputra University Surabaya) and foreign universities (i.e. Leeds Metropolitan University, England). Epler Wood [6] states that local community participation would

support the overall success of ecotourism program. Evaluation acts as a decision-making process to determine the future sustainability of ecotourism itself [21].

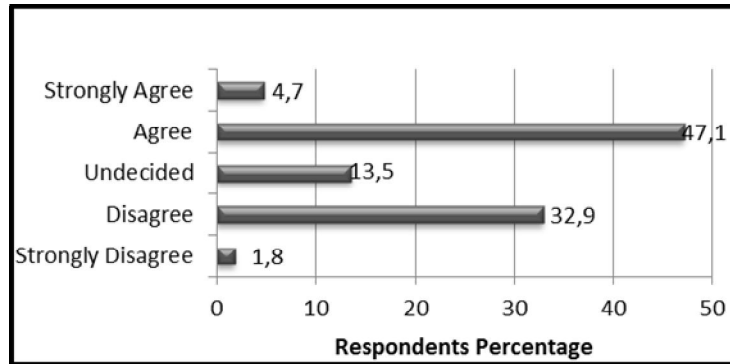


Figure 5. Benefits of ecotourism to local community

Local community participation in ecotourism evaluation

This study shows that participation level of the local people in ecotourism program is still very low. From the six indicators proposed, it could be seen that the local community had not been involved in the development of ecotourism program. Thus, there should be improvement in the participation level of the villagers. The ecotourism program in Tambaksari Village was still at the second year when the study was conducted; therefore, in the future, improvement of the local community participation is indispensable for the sustainability of the program itself.

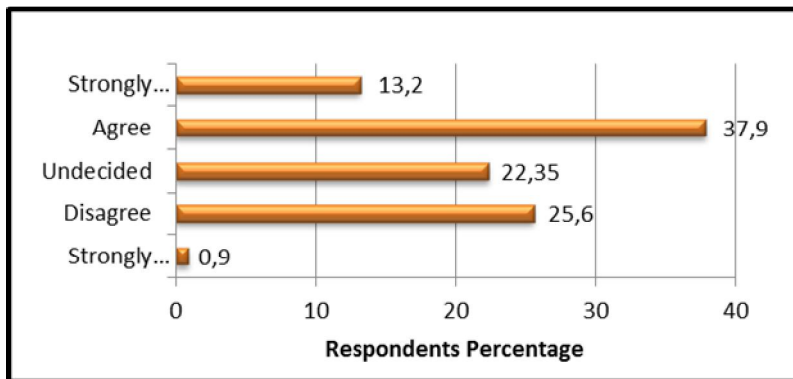


Figure 6. Local community participation in ecotourism evaluation

Normally community participation level is rather low because of the lack of financial resources, an abundant number of international tour operators, and the government policy [7][22][23]. This situation can also be seen from the report by Aref and Redzuan [10] who state that there are operational, structural, and cultural barriers which cause the low level of participation of local community in the development of tourism in Iran.

CONCLUSION

Local community participation is needed to maintain the development of tourism sector. Local community will bring with them their uniqueness, which may become a good source of ideas, creativity, and innovation. These sources will, in turn, help to support the existence of tourism itself in the long run. Results of the study indicate some real conditions in the development of ecotourism in Tambaksari Village. First, most of the villagers in Tambaksari were not yet involved in the planning of ecotourism development. Second, not all villagers were involved in the decision-making. Third, not all villagers were involved in the implementation of ecotourism; instead, there were only few people involved in the implementation of ecotourism. Fourth, the majority of the community received benefits of ecotourism program development. Fifth, the majority of the villagers had been involved in the evaluation of ecotourism activities. In conclusion, community participation in the ecotourism development in Tambaksari Village still needs to be improved as to maintain and support the growth of the ecotourism sector itself.

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