COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT EFFORTS IN SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT IN NORTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the main economic sectors of the North Sulawesi province. One of the highly developed tourism activities are ecotourism. Type of these tourist activities suggest the concept that was more concerned about the value of nature conservation and its environmental services in the destination sites to serve as tourist attractions. The number of foreign tourists visiting in North Sulawesi in 2006 reached 15,902 people and in 2007 reached 20,000 people while in 2008 reached 19,576 people. The number of foreign tourists every year increase 6.46% in 2007, and 13% in 2008. Globally the growth of ecotourism in 2004 reached three times faster than other tourism industries. Ecotourism is an integrated activity, prioritizes a balance between enjoying the nature beauties and maintain the sustainability of ecosystem services by involving participation of local people and tourists. This paper analyzes the environmental conservation efforts of nature and culture with an emphasis on empowering local communities, community participation in the ecotourism development, and an increase of local community welfare.

Keywords : Natural resources, community empowerment, sustainable ecotourism.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of modernization, more and more people who need compensation to enjoy in his leisure time by doing a tour. Naisbit (1994) has estimated that beginning in 2000, the tourism sector will be the largest industry in the world and contributes to economies globally. As a contributor to the global economy, the tourism sector has been able to employ 200 million people worldwide, or 10.6% of the global workforce, and produces 10.2% gross national product of the world, with a gross expenditure approaching US $ 3.4 trillion, and became a leading manufacturer with the biggest tax revenue reached US $ 655 billion (WTO, 2000). This condition has continued to increase, as indicated by the tax revenue to reach US $ 720 billion (WTO, 2006).

Tourism has undergone a paradigm shift in line with the implementation of sustainable development concepts. Tourism activities began to shift from the capital based tourism (mass tourism) became the nature based tourism and traditiona-culture based tourism (special interest). One of these nature-based tourism activities are ecotourism. Ecotourism can serve as an educational and awareness for tourists, local communities and other stakeholders about the importance of environmental sustainability, concepts of preservation and conservation of natural resources, environment and local cultures.

Since 2002 the Government of Indonesia in particular has articulated the concept of ecotourism in the sustainable tourism development. According to Hakim (2004), ecotourism is the concept of tourism that reflects the environmental insight and following the rules of balance and sustainability of natural resources and the environment. Development of ecotourism should be able to improve the quality of human relationships, improve the quality of life of local people and maintain the quality of natural resources and the environment.

![Figure 1. Potencies of nature tourism in Likupang, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. (Source : Personal Documentation, 2009).](image-url)
empowering local workforce and improves the well-being of local people. Ardiwidjaja (2003) in Atmoko (2008) stated that the ecotourism approaches can be used as a tool in natural resource conservation activities in the certain area. Ecotourism aims to improve fosters the well-being of local communities. Ecotourism is a form of conservation of natural resources and the environment and it is expected to involve tourists. Ecotourism seeks to direct any economic motives to the preservation of the natural resources that can create added values for the local community. The economic and environmental aspects are usually not able to progress synergistically. This requires policies that integrate environmental and economic interests.

Development of ecotourism in the area of nature preservation, such as national parks or protected forest, must meet the three principles, namely guaranteeing the protection of the supporting system of life, preserving the biodiversity of flora and fauna and their ecosystems, and utilization of biological resources sustainably. The development of the tourism sector requires the synergistic actions among the government, community and private sectors.

Indonesia has various natural resources, cultural diversity, and a high quality of local communities, so that community-based tourism development is considered to be very important to be developed into the leading sector of regional economic. The tourism sector that is developed through the concept of community-based tourism can be directed to the economic driving force in the regional development.

Figure 2. Potencies of beach tourism in Likupang, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. (Source: Personal Documentation, 2009)

In terms of other aspects, the potential for tourism was still not optimally developed, this sector produces numerous benefits and advantages, both from the domestic market and international market. Considering the magnitude of their economic multiplier effects, the government has performed the development of community-based tourism sector through the program of regional based tourism development throughout Indonesia.

Tourism investment is expected to create jobs and small scales business activities, ranging from transportation services, hotels and rooming-houses, restaurants and culiner cafe, package of tourism events, production of traditional souvenirs and other tourism services which can be done by local communities.

Figure 3. Potencies of forest ecotourism in Mahawu Mountain, North Sulawesi, Indonesia: Hiking and Camping activities. (Source: Personal Documentation, 2011).

ECOTOURISM AND CONSERVATION

Tourism in the conservation area has a range of benefits and advantages, as well as a financing source for the conservation areas. Basically the responsibility of planners and managers of conservation areas to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Some of the benefits and advantages of the tourist development in the conservation areas are: (1) improving the economic of the surrounding communities, (2) conservation of natural and cultural resources, and (3) improve the quality of life of the local community (Fandeli and Nurdin, 2005).

Conservation as a basis for ecotourism is an important principle in formulating and setting the vision and mission of ecotourism development. The critical mission in ecotourism development are nature preservation through the conservation of biodiversity and its ecosystem, local job creation, community economic development as a justice.
A concept of ecotourism development has been suggested by Hidayati et al. (2003), the business of ecotourism development in Indonesia are still at the early stages. According to Hadi (2007), tourism currently tend to give the benefits to the international companies and mass tourisms oriented to just simply enjoy the beauty of nature (sea, sand and sun), net yet a lot of creating added values to the local community (local value added), not to prioritize the conservation of the cultural and social values and not to minimize environmental impacts.

According to the formal regulations, ecotourism management should refer to the public policies relating to nature conservation areas, that is the Act No. 5 / 1990 concerning The Conservation of Natural Resources, Biodiversity and its Ecosystems. Ecotourism should prioritize the positive impacts on the environment and local culture, increase revenue, open jobs, and preserving the local ecosystems.

With another point of view, Ramly (2007) stated that tourism is one of the strategic sectors of economy in the future. The identification and planning of the tourism industry development should be done in more accurate and details. Development of the tourism industry is expected to support any efforts in preserving natural resources, the richness of biodiversity and the richness of traditional culture. Development of tourist areas is an alternative that is expected to support the utilization of local economic resources and environmental preservation efforts.

Ecotourism in Indonesia are generally located in areas of nature conservation.
ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT

In the context of ecotourism, natural resources are viewed as assets that have economic values and ecological values, so that tourist activities that are generated should be non-extractives. A symbiotic approaches are usually used by the developer and manager of ecotourism, where the actors interacting positively with their ecotourism zones and not a parasitic schemes.

Development of ecotourism should be able to benefit economically for local people, and can be a driving force of the regional economic development. Development of ecotourism are expected to encourage regional development that is more balanced among the needs of nature and environmental conservation with the needs of economic growth. Development of ecotourism is directed to provide any sustainable benefits for the local community in the ways: Enlarging the opportunities for local people to become actors of ecotourism, and empowering local communities within the scope of ecotourism business.

Ecotourism development concept essentially seeks to encourage cooperations among the parties concerned. More synergistic and adaptive cooperation among the actors of ecotourism is essential for the ecotourism development in Indonesia. Development of ecotourism should be able to provide satisfaction and original experiences to the visitors; create a sense of secure and comfortable; and support the sustainability of ecotourism business.

As it known that ecotourism activities directly or indirectly directed tourists to appreciate and love nature and local cultures, so as to enhance awareness and concern of the tourists in maintaining sustainability of nature and cultures. There are three stages that should be done to achieve a success in the ecotourism management that is starting from planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation integratedly. The important considerations in ecotourism planning include the potencies of ecotourism to be developed and their available infrastructures, the accessibility of tourist sites and quality of tourism actors.
SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The integrated approaches in ecotourism development are necessary in order to develop the sustainable ecotourism and community-based ecotourism. This ecotourism development approach requires all stakeholders’ involvement in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, so as to integrate all the interests of government, local communities, businesses actors, researchers, academics, and ecotourism NGOs.

Some things that should be considered in the physical planning are the availability of supporting facilities and accessibilities in tourist sites. Planning the integrated tourism region consist of Eco-destination Master Plan containing the comprehensive framework, relevant stakeholders (local, regional, national) and the respective responsibilities of stakeholders for the nature conservation, enhancement of the local economy and the appreciation of the local cultures (Heher, 2003).

Conceptually the success of ecotourism depends on several things: internal factors, external factors and structural factors. Internal factors include the potential of ecotourism, knowledge and perceptions of ecotourism operators about environmental preservation, and participation of local residents. External factors include tourist awareness about environmental sustainability, research and education activities at the site of ecotourism for the benefits of environmental sustainability and the local community welfare.

Development of a sustainable tourism emphasizes goals and synergism between local communities, tourists and tourist destination, to complement each others. Sustainability of natural and cultural resources of the local community can go hand in hand in satisfying the tourists needs and the harmony between the tourism industry, environmentalist and local communities. In sustainable tourism, needs of the local community is the main priority, both in the planning of tourism and its management.

The tourism development does not only provide benefits and advancement of tourism alone, but also the local communities will better understand and aware about the environmental services and variety of human culture results (Ardika, 2001). Environmental experts and researcher realize that efforts to enhance environmental sustainability should be supported by the communities, in particular the local people. Usually the local people will support if they also benefits from the environmental services to improve their welfare.

LOCAL COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

One of the factors in the tourism management is community empowerment efforts. It is important so that local communities can be involved in ecotourism activities and can improve their social welfare without neglecting any socio-cultural values. Community empowerment efforts are more directed to strengthening the people abilities in the tourism decision making and people ability to develop creative and initiatives activities in relation to tourism.

In developing the alternative tourisms, concept of sustainable development includes efforts to maintain ecological integrity and diversity, to meet the basic human needs, to sustain benefits for future generations, and to improve the local people welfare.

The importance of techniques and strategies in ecotourism development of is determined based on ecosystem properties and management units, as well as integrated development of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The result of this approach is implementation of the ecotourism development program oriented in conservation and utilization.
of natural resources, local community empowerment, and sustainable nature services.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 11. The conservation farming system in mountainous lands of Mahawu has a high tourism value. Climatic conditions and comfortable environment, with the nature beauties resulted in these farmlands “very attractive” for tourists. Horticultural crops (fruit and vegetable) became souvenirs for tourists. (Source: Personal Documentation, 2012; Location : Mt. Mahawu Tomohon, North Sulawesi, Indonesia).

Activities to increase involvements of society are the human capacity buildings. This is usually done in the form of trainings, extensions and dissemination of the concept of ecotourism, small business empowerment, tour guide and accommodation management (eco-lodge). In addition, community empowerment can be done with a business loan to open a culinary shops/cafe, making traditional souvenirs, souvenirs store and traditional transport tools mountain bikes.

Concept of the community based development suggests the bottom-up planning, development as social learning, involving the local community participations in a various of development activities, so that the management of development is carried out by communities directly affected by their development activities or Community Management (Korten, 1986 in Lubis, 2004).

Community based tourism development refers to tourism development coming from the people, by the people and for the people. This approach is basically also a model of community empowerment which gives more opportunities to local communities to participate effectively in tourism activities. This shows that the “full access” for the local community is beneficial to mobilize social capital in managing the comparative advantages of local resources.

CONCLUSION

1. The concept of sustainable tourism are actively able to maintain the sustainability of the socio-cultures and nature services in relation to the tourism pillars, that are local community economy, environment and socio-cultures.
2. Sustainable Tourism Development is a development that is environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and fair in social and ethics for the local community.
3. Measure the success of ecotourism is the local community involvement in tourism development activities, start from the planning, implementation , monitoring and program evaluation. The local community as the main factor, which can participate directly in decision-making to improve their social welfare through ecotourism activities.

REFERENCE


