

UDC 332

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SOCIETY-BASED TOURISM: A STUDY ON BLITAR DISTRICT, INDONESIA

Kurniawan Andy*

Public Administration Program, Faculty of Administrative Science, University of Brawijaya,
Indonesia

Supriono

Tourism Program, Faculty of Administrative Science, University of Brawijaya, Indonesia

*E-mail: andy_kur_niawan@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

Blitar District in Indonesia owned considerable tourism potentials that could be further developed. The development of tourism sector could be administered by enhancing the participation of the local society since the development might directly affect their economic condition. This research was conducted to investigate the direct impact of the participation from the society in the tourism sector development in Blitar District, relevant parties that contributed to the enhancement of community's participation, and to investigate the steps of the community participation enhancement in Blitar District. The results of this research showed that community participation had important role in the development of tourism sector in Blitar District. Several parties also made significant contribution to the enhancement of community participation including the Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport and community leaders. Furthermore, community participation was enhanced through several steps including planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

KEY WORDS

Tourism, development, community, participation, Blitar district.

Blitar District has strong and strategic tourism potentials that can be further developed to enhance the regional autonomy as the development of this sector will be able to stimulate the development of other sectors. It has been determined that the development of tourism sector in Blitar is directed to improve the contribution of this sector to the economic growth of the region. Tourism sector can be developed by exploring the natural, environmental and typical resources of the region such as exploring the potentials of the beaches, culture, and tradition.

The capability of a region in developing sustainable tourism to give benefits for every relevant party is considered important and it should be addressed by every regional government. The community will also take benefits in the form of higher income as they are involved in the development of tourism sector which eventually increases the amount of regional revenue. Tourism development should involve the community as this program is intended to improve the prosperity of the community by empowering them to be actively involved in the development in order to obtain the best benefits from it and to properly manage the resources, tourist attractions, and preserve the cultural and natural inheritance (Ardika, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term tourism has been widely defined by some experts of this field. However, there have been different definitions of the term. The followings are the definitions of tourism according to some experts.

According to Hunziker and Kraf (1942), tourism is the whole phenomenon and relations from the temporary journey and transit of people outside their place of residence

without the intention of getting settle and without anything related to work that produces wages. The journeys are often done out of curiosity for recreational and educational purposes. (in Kohdyat, 1996)

According to McIntosh and Gupta (1980), tourism is defined as a combination of symptoms and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, businesses, host governments and host community in attracting and serving the tourists and other visitors.

According to Wahab (2003), tourism refers to the conscious activity done by people as they receive service alternately among people in a country or regions for a while to obtain satisfactions that are different from their experience in performing their permanent job. It is understood from those definition that there is one red line mentioning that tourism refers to traveling activities. Travelling activities are done for recreational purposes or to seek the joy from different atmospheres offered by certain attractions. Natural landscape is often a strong tourist attraction that fulfills humans' recreational needs. Likewise, cultural activities and other artificial attractions also become interesting tourist attractions. For example, tourist attractions that offer activities relating to natural scenery and water can be called water tourism.

A broader definition of tourism has been proposed by Spillane (1987) stating that tourism deals with temporary travel done by individuals or a group of people from one place to the other place to seek for balance, harmony and happiness in their life, social dimension, cultural dimension, natural dimension and knowledge.

Monks and Hadinoto (2001) stated that the term development refers to any process that is directed to gain perfection that cannot be simply repeated. Development also deals with any temporary changes that cannot be rewind.

McLeod (1989) defined development as the process or steps of growth to advancement. Growth also refers to the steps to improve something at certain amount, level, and significance. Growth also relates to a stage of development.

The development of tourism sectors should include local community as it is expected to give benefits for the community without destructing the social and cultural values of among the community and by limiting the number of visitors based on each attraction's carrying capacity (Suwanto, 1997).

As the response to the principles stated above, Dutton and Hall (1989) identified the various mechanisms that can be employed as the guideline to achieve sustainable and realistic tourism development plans:

- Enhancing better cooperation and attention to improve the benefits from every approach. Hence, tourism development plan should be made cooperative based on a clear integrated control system.
- Developing the mechanism of industrial coordination.
- Improving consumer awareness of sustainable and unsustainable tourism options including the benefits that they can obtain.
- Promoting producers' awareness of the benefits of sustainable tourism development plan.
- Substituting conventional approaches with strategic ones. Relevant parties are expected to build strong commitment to achieve sustainable objectives.
- Giving greater attention to the needs of quality and experience planning for visitors based on long-term sustainable development plan of certain tourist attractions by developing sustainable tourist attraction together. Sustainable tourism is a development that supports the ecology and economy of a region as it has fair ethical and social benefits for the local society. In another word, the development of sustainable tourism is an integrated and organized effort to improve the quality of life by managing the supply, improvement, utilization and preserving the natural and cultural resources in sustainable way. Sustainable tourism is defined as the development of tourism sector based on the certain needs by regarding the sustainability of the environment to give positive benefits for the current and the future generations (Puslitbang BP. Budpar, 2003).

Community participation is seen as the involvement of the community in identifying the problems and potentials owned by the community and in selecting and determining various decisions as alternative solution to address the problems (problem solving) and the involvement of the community in evaluating various changes that occur (Adi, 2007). Besides, local community participation also refers to the involvement and contribution of the community to actualize the resources, willingness and community capacity in planning, designing and implementing certain program to develop their tourism sector (Adisasmita, 2006).

METHODS OF RESEARCH

The data of this qualitative research were collected through in-depth interviews with the Department of Cultural and Tourism of Blitar District and relevant players in tourism sector in the region. Interviews were conducted using a set of open-ended questions, allowing the respondents to express their comprehensive views about the questions. The collected data were then analyzed using data triangulation procedure and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

RESULTS OF STUDY

Blitar District and its diverse characteristics has strong tourism potentials that can be developed. Furthermore, its potentials of natural, cultural and artificial tourism resources can be developed as strategic plan to the development of the tourism sector in the region. The development of the tourism sector can in Blitar District can be administered by empowering the local community through these following steps.

Planning stage shows the extent to which local communities are involved in the tourism development process starting from the identification of problems, identification of potential development, analysis and forecasting of future environmental conditions, and the development of alternative plans and facilities. At this stage, the community in Blitar District was not actively and completely involved in identifying any problems or friction that arises and in developing the potentials and matters related to tourism development in Blitar District. This occurred due to the lack of knowledge and experience that led to weak community participation in Blitar District in creating plans related to the development. The Office of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports was challenged to disseminate the importance of tourism activities and the positive benefits of developing the tourism sector for the community.

This stage shows the contribution of the community involvement in the tourism development. At this stage, some people in Blitar District have begun to be aware of the great potentials to be developed in their area. Theoretically, at this stage, the community will start to get actively involved in the implementation and management of certain tourist attraction.

At this stage, the community started to understand the importance of managing and preserving the potentials. *Pokdarwis* or local tourism community in Blitar District has developed a set of programs related to development of tourism sector to preserve the potential and maintain the cleanliness of surrounding environment. The programs designed by *Pokdarwis* were clean-up activities. The participation of the community was also enhanced as the community leaders in Blitar District led them to be actively involved in the programs to improve the tourist attraction. However, support from other relevant parties was still necessary to optimally enhance the participation of the community to give significant contribution to the success of the program.

In the implementation stage, the community has grown intensive participation manifested in their active role during the development process. In this research, local communities in Blitar District grew their awareness about the benefits that can be gained from tourism activities at this particular stage. People started to believe that the development of tourism in their region might be a good first step to improve their quality of life as it could be used to increase their income through available job vacancies.

Theoretically, at this stage, the community begins to materialize their roles and positions in monitoring or evaluating the program, including evaluation of economic and socio-cultural benefits in improving the social, economic and cultural welfare of the local community. In this research, community participation at this stage was enhanced as they played active roles; even some of them opened their own shops (*warung*) to provide tourists' necessities such as food, drinks, soap, medicines and other needs in several tourist attractions especially in well-known attractions. In addition, some people also built public toilets and prayer rooms to fulfill tourists' needs and they even provide lodging places for tourists who want to stay. The involvement of the local community at this stage shows that the community has started to utilize the potentials that they have in their area as to obtain higher income. However, the community participation is regarded as a support to the tourism development because people in Blitar District have not been able to optimally manage their roles in developing the tourism sector in Blitar District.

CONCLUSION

The development of tourism sector in Blitar District needs intensive participation of the local community to support its success.

There are some steps that occur in enhancing the local community participation in the development of tourism sector including Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Several parties are involved in enhancing the community participation to support the success of the tourism development program including the Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports of Blitar District, *Kelompok Sadar Wisata* (Tourism Organization) and Community Leaders.

SUGGESTIONS

The development of tourism sector in Blitar District is considered an urgent program. Therefore, stakeholders, especially local communities are expected to open their mind and grow willingness to learn about tourism management.

Relevant institutions are suggested to give adequate support for local community to be actively and optimally participated in the development of tourism sector in Blitar District.

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