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Community Participation in Tourism Destination Development: Lesson from Kelor Tourism Village

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Abstract

Kelor Tourism Village is a tourism destination that is well-developed in Sleman Regency. This study aimed to analyze the forms of community participation in developing Kelor Tourism Village as a tourism destination. Qualitative descriptive methods was used to describe the phenomena in the research object by using observation, interviews, and documentation to collect the data. This study showed the form of community participation in Kelor Tourism Village which consisted of two types: direct and indirect participation. The direct participation could be seen in the participation of the villagers, which included providers of tourist attractions, homestay providers, and the managers of *Pokdarwis*, in making decisions in every stage of the development of the tourist village. Meanwhile, the form of indirect participation carried out by the villagers was the participation in investing the operational costs of the tourism village. These participation forms have been solidly built since the beginning of their formation until now. The administrators' enthusiasm in encouraging the community was a factor to grow their sense of ownership. Strong participation among the community also made Kelor Tourism Village economically independent and sustainable.

Keywords: Community participation, destination image, tourism village

Introduction

Tourism village has become an attractive destination for both domestic and international tourists. Several regions like Sleman Regency have turned tourism villages into a regional economic development program (Ahimsa-Putra, 2011; Ulum & Dewi, 2021). One of the tourism villages that has been considered as an independent tourism village for its consistency in their eagerness to serve the tourists and distribute the benefits obtained to its community is Kelor Tourism Village. Kelor Tourism Village is located on the slope of Mount Merapi. It was originally a village which has a historical *joglo* that has already been 200 years old. The *joglo*, owned by R.M. Sosro Pranoto, was built in 1835 and is still well-maintained without having any renovations. The interior of the *joglo* room is very distinctive and has historical significance. The *joglo* has witnessed the history of the

struggle of *Tentara Pelajar* (soldiers formed by students back in colonial era) in Yogyakarta. It is said that the *joglo* became a gathering place for the leaders of those soldiers to hold meetings and arrange strategies against the Dutch, who once colonialized this country. According to one of the administrators, the *joglo* has a strong metaphysical power. People believe that it was the reason why this *joglo* never caught the colonizer's attention despite its activity.

From its strong historical root, the people of Kelor Village attempted to develop a tourism village. This tourism village was expected to give an economical benefit to its people, which later resulted in the improvement of people's prosperity. As the result, Kelor Tourism Village was established in 2006 and has been running since then. However, the development of this tourism village stopped for a while due to natural disasters, such as Merapi eruption and Covid-19 pandemic. Even, this village also got affected when Merapi erupted in 2010 as its villagers needed to evacuate for a while. Furthermore, in 2020, Covid-19 has influenced all the tourism activity around the world, including Kelor Tourism Village. There was no tourist visiting this village. This condition was worsened by the PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) policy released by the Indonesian Government to limit people's activity outside the room in order to restrain the spread of Coronavirus.

After PSBB, the government implemented PPKM (the Restrictions on the Community Activities) (Orinaldi, 2021). This time, the people were allowed to do several activities outside even though it was still limited. During this situation, the economy in Indonesia started to run again. Luckily, the pandemic did not make Kelor Tourism Village fall apart. Instead, during PPKM situation, Kelor Tourism Village began to build up its branding by adding various attractions and facilities that strengthened the historical impression of that place (Wirantaka & Gendroyono, 2020). Also, Kelor Tourism Village offered various innovations, such as Stanplat Pit, which was a kind of cycling activity done by a group of tourists to see the beautiful nature of the village. This has become one of the main attraction offered during the pandemic as the number of the participants were limited and the activity must be carried out with a strict health protocol.

The dynamic activity in Kelor Tourism Village still continues until today. Thus, the income for the people living there, especially from the tourism sector, remains stable, given the fact that Kelor Village was previously known as a village lacked in economics and human resources. At that time, the people only relied on *salak* farming to meet their

daily needs. This condition was no longer the issue after the establisment of the tourism village. The tourism activities even can support *salak* farming there. All management activities in this place are carried out by the people themselves. Hence, based on the description above, this study aimed to analyze the community participation in maintaining Kelor Tourism Village as a tourist destination. The analysis results can be used as a reference for other similar tourism destinations in fostering their community participation.

Community Participation

Community empowerment in managing tourism villages refers to how the community has tremendous social and structural influence to make decisions for their interests. It indicates that community empowerment is closely related to the level of community participation (Syaifudin & Ma'ruf, 2022). Participation is an activity in providing information, decision-making, and organizational management (Sugihariyanto et al., 2019; Sumarto, 2019). In developing a tourism village, the active participation of the community is essential (Nurvianti & Hastuti, 2021). Community participation in developing their places, especially in rural communities, consists of two types, which are (1) participation in joint activities in specific development projects; and (2) participation as an individual outside of joint activities in development (Koentjaraningrat, 2015).

In the first type of participation, the rural community is invited, persuaded, ordered, or forced by various departments or village government representatives to participate and donate their labor or wealth to specific and physical projects. Meanhile, in the second type of participation, there is no specific joint activity project, yet the community are expected to do projects that are not entirely physical and carried out on their own intention without being asked by the external parties.

Participation can also be distinguished based on the degree of involvement, which are direct, indirect, and zero participation (Dewi, 2013). In direct participation, the community involved as the managers of the tourist attractions or tourism business actors. In indirect participation, however, the community only provides raw materials, such as food and beverage raw materials for the tourists, building materials, craft materials, and funds. In zero or non-participant, the community is not involved in all aspects of tourism

development and management at all, including planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring the tourism development in their places.

Damanik & Weber (2006) said that there is a parameter used to measure community participation. This parameter is called an analysis of community participation in each stage of tourism destination development, which is divided into the followings:

1. Planning Stage. The community initiation involves identifying problems, formulating goals, making decisions related to tourism development, and investing funds;

2. Implementation Stage. The community participation in the implementation stage includes managing tourism villages' businesses, attractions, and amenities, for example as homestay managers, tour guides, and tourist attraction managers, which involve in improving infrastructure and as suppliers of materials for tourism; and

3. Monitoring Stage. The community participation in supervision has a controlling role over the tourism village's operational activities and every related decision-making.

Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive method to describe the phenomenon of the community participation and the research object was Kelor Tourism Village in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta. The data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Interviews were done by using a purposive sampling technique to five informants, each of whom were 3 administrators of *Pokdarwis* (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* - a group in a society that organize the tourism attractions managed by local community) which were the managing institution of Kelor Tourism Village, and two villagers. The criteria set for the informants were participating in the early stages of planning and being active in the management and monitoring stages. The stages of analysis are described as follows: description of community participation as a theoretical basis, analysis of community participation in the planning stage, analysis of community participation in the management stage, and analysis of community participation in the monitoring stage.

Result and Discussion

The principle of a tourism village management is that it is carried out by the community or local people as the leading actor. The most important thing in managing a tourism village lies in how big the involvement of the community as a party that is in charge of carrying out the activities at the operational level. To analyze it, we can see it from their participation in each stage of developing a tourism village, which consists of the planning, implementation, and monitoring stages, whose degree of involvement can be classified into direct, indirect, and non-participation participation.

Planning

Kelor Tourism Village was formed based on the community's idea facilitated by several parties, such as the Sleman Regency Culture and Tourism Office and UMY (Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta) Communication Studies students. Several villagers were directly involved in formulating the development plan of this tourism village development plan, which included identifying the problem, goal, and decision taking. This initial activity was done by holding a meeting with several villagers and other related parties in one of their houses. The people involved in the initial formulation of the formation of the Kelor Tourism Village initially only consisted of young people who often interacted with people outside their village.

After formulating the initial concept of forming a tourism village, those people tried to communicate with the villagers.

> "*After getting an idea, the most difficult thing to do is talking to other villagers. We were not sure whether or not our idea would be accepted by the others. But after discussing it together, majority agreed and were enthusiastic about starting a tourism village. Then, we started compiling what had to be done, starting from preparing the costs and forming* Pokdarwis*, any required permits, land use, and plans for the products offered. In the process, we were not alone because one of the villagers who is also a member of the Sleman Culture and Tourism Office helped us*" (interview result with the informant)

In carrying out this planning stage, many villagers were directly involved, especially the young people and several women. Only elder people did not actively participate in the initial plan for developing the tourism village. The villagers had a strong desire to build their area. This factor encouraged them to actively participate in the

planning and also following stages. Since it was based on their own initiative, their sense of ownership of the tourism business in their village was also relatively high which rose the people's control towards the implementation of the activities of the tourism village. It is lined with (Vermanda Maharani Sonya & Imam Indratno, 2022) that participation can work well if there is a sense of community ownership.

> "*Almost all people here were involved in the formulation of the initial plan, especially the young ones. We held meetings in one of the people's houses everyday. These meetings were held once a week or once every two weeks. All villagers were present, including the men and women. Only the elders were not present*" (Interview result with the informants).

Implementation

In the implementation stage, the local people were involved as the administrators of *Pokdarwis*, providers of homestay businesses, providers of food and beverages for the tourists, and providers of cultural attractions. This involvement was also based on the capacity and ability of each people. The villagers who were responsible for the management of *Pokdarwis* mostly consisted of the young people. They acted as administrative managers, tour guides, security guards, and also the ones whose responsibility was to make sure that all the tourism activities ran smoothly. According to the informants, the participation of young people in managing *Pokdarwis* was quite good, but they still needed more specific training in that field.

> "*The young people who become members of the organization have already been active. However, unfortunately, there has been no particular training for them because there has not been any information from the local government. Also,* Pokdarwis *expects the government to give any particular training for the people in the tourism village, for example: training in making batik, making excellent food, creating souvenirs, and other productive activities. As we all have known, in Kelor, there is not any memorable souvenirs which characterize this village. That is because we are still thinking about what kind of souvenirs we want to make and, of course, that attract the visitors."* (Interview result with the informants).

The administrators of *Pokdarwis* consisted of a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, field coordinator, and several divisions. The managerial was replaced every five years through a forum. The change in managerial was intended to provide an opportunity for other people there to actively participate in managing the organization (Kusworo, 2015).

"*We provide opportunities for all people here, especially the young ones, to participate in the core management of* Pokdarwis. *The purpose is to improve their abilities and experience as the next generation. There were also young people who initially has moved to big cities, which then returned home and joined* Pokdarwis." (Interview result with the informants).

Furthermore, the people of Kelor Village had actively become the homestay service providers. They were willing to provide their houses as a temporary housing for the tourists to support the tourism activities in Kelor Village. There have been 70 houses out of 80 used as homestays. The administrators of Kelor Tourism Village determined the criteria that must be fulfiled by the villagers who wanted to offer their houses as homestays. The homestays condition must be clean and the hospitality of the owners must also be excellent, so that it would give comfortable atmosphere for the tourists. The homestays in this tourism village were generally similar and there was not any classification which was based on the facilities. In addition, the villagers were not allowed to give any name board infront of their homestays. That was to avoid any social jealousy which might occur between them. The homestay in Kelor Tourism Village was a part of the tour package offered, so that the tourists could not choose which houses they wanted to live in. The administrators must regulate the distribution of the tourists to each resident's house fairly, so that it would avoid any problems caused by the inequality in homestay allocations.

To supply the food and beverages for the tourists during their tourism activities, the female villagers became an essential part of this activity. Together, they cooked local and distinguished food which was provided based on the tourists' requests. This female group generally consisted of middle aged women who looked for an additional income. In doing it, they could choose to do it alone or help each other. The food that they served was quite diverse, with relatively low prices. The food and beverages were also included in the tour package.

The villagers also participated in every event or activity held in Kelor Tourism Village. Based on the author's observations, they worked together to make all the events held ran smoothly. The job distribution was carried out by *Pokdarwis* and adjusted to the capacity of each member. Moreover, the villagers also livened up the event by performing regional arts, such as *jathilan*, *gamelan*, *sholawatan*, and Yogyakarta traditional dance.

"*The art performances, such as jathilan, gamelan, traditional dance, sholawatan, and others are performed by the villagers themselves. Here, the people have been introduced to the local arts and traditions from the ancestors since we were still a child. Usually, before doing a performance, we do rehearsals first to give the best performance on the stage for the tourists. The ones who do the performance are usually young people or teenagers, but sometimes the older men also join the show, and so do the administrator. Yet, it depends on the situation and conditions*" (interview with informant).

Beside participating directly, the villagers also contributed in investing the fund for tourism development in their environment. The financial resources for these activities and any issue related to the tourism village management were from the government funding in form of PNPM Mandiri, the people's investment, and the income obtained from the tour package business. The amount of the investment given by the villagers varied for everyone and it was not a must. This investment initially came from the villagers themselves as they wished to improve their living standards by developing a tourism village. Although it has been able to evenly distribute to all villagers, this amount of investment was sufficient to support the operational activities of the Kelor Tourism Village. The investors also got benefit in the form of profit that has been agreed before.

While facing a crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the people there continued to carry out several activities that led to post-pandemic recovery planning. When the Indonesian Government implemented PPKM, they began to reorganize Kelor Tourism Village by carrying out the following innovations:

1. Making a name plate as a part of Kelor Tourism Village identity;
2. Collecting historical data to strengthen the identity of Kelor Tourism Village as a historical tourist destination;
3. Making uniforms based on the revolutionary era for the villagers;
4. Preparing Stanplat Pit package as a new attraction that enabled the tourists to cycle around the village.

Supervision

In the process of tourism village management, the villagers were active in supervising the operational activities. Their participation in supervision stage was in the form of their involvement in every internal meeting held every three months between the administrators and the villagers. The meeting discussed the distribution of payment, the distribution of profits from the tourism business for the villagers who did the investment,

and the performance evaluation of the members of *Pokdarwis*. In addition, this meeting also discussed the agenda for further activities.

> "*Nowadays, the meetings are not held as often as before. Instead,it only is only held once every three months. It is held to evaluate our performance, whether it has been good or still needs any improvement. During this meeting, all villagers who are present are free to express their opinion. We also discuss the agenda for the next three months and what preparations which are needed, for example, before fasting and Eid,* Pokdarwis *will distribute gifts to all families in Kelor Village.*" (Interview with the informants).

The distribution of payment to the villagers was adjusted to the amount of their contribution to the management of the tourism village.

> "*The period of payment distribution is different from one person to another. The main members and tour guides are paid monthly. However, the female group will get paid every three months. It all depends on their request. The reason why the female wished to get paid every three months is because they want to save it first. After three months, they will take their payment. Some even take it after six months. The amount of the payment is calculated based on the capacity and type of work. The administrators record the names of villagers and their work while monitoring them. This monitoring actvity is not that strict, so that they can work comfortably and do not feel under pressure*" (Interview with the informants).

As for the villagers who invested their money in this tourism business, the amount of profit shared was also based on the number of everyone's funds which is, of course, by mutual agreement.

> "*The villagers who invest in* Pokdarwis *will of course get a benefit in the form of profit sharing. We set a large percentage according to what is mutually agreed before. For those who invest more, they will receive the greater sharing than the others. The distribution of profit is also done during our meetings every three months*" (Interview with the informants).

All villlagers were expected to attend this internal meeting which is held regularly.

> "*This meeting, which is held every three months, is attended by most of the villagers. Those who are unable to come are usually the older people because of their physical condition. During this meeting, all people must actively provide input,*

either criticize or suggest something, since it is very valuable to improve our performance." (Interview with the informants).

Based on the experience, as long as Kelor Tourism Village was still running, the participation level of the villagers in the evaluations increased. Now that many villagers have become investors, their sense of ownership has also grown. It also made them more concerned about the development of this village as a tourist destination.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the community control over the activities of the tourism village management has been strong enough. Their awareness of the rights and duties emerged as a response to tourism development in their village. Every villagers wanted to participate as a decision-maker in every problem they faced. In addition, the sense of ownership of the tourism village was also very high.

Conclusion

The form of participation carried out by the villagers in managing Kelor Tourism Village consisted of two types: direct and indirect participation. Direct participation could be seen in the participation of the villagers in making decisions at every stage of the development of a tourism village, providing tourist attractions (local arts performances, providers of salak gardens), homestay, and managing *Pokdarwis*. Meanwhile, the form of indirect participation carried out by the villagers was their participation in investing the operational costs of the tourism village.

The participation was carried out by all villagers almost equally. That was because of two things: most of the villagers were in the productive age range, and there was enthusiasm among the people to build their village. This enthusiasm was also based on a high sense of ownership of their co-founded tourism activities. Therefore, their participation was developed as the form of their responsibilities as development actors for their environment.

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