

Analysis of Community Participation in the Development of Riangsunge Beach as a Tourist Attraction in Ritaebang Village, East Flores Regency

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Abstract: Riangsunge Beach a tourist destination in East Flores Regency, has been developing and developing in recent years. The development and development were carried out significantly by the Regional Government through the Tourism Office. This research is motivated by the minimal involvement of the community in the development of Riangsunge Beach as a tourist attraction in Ritaebang Village, West Solor District, East Flores Regency. This study aims to examine the participation of the local community in the development of tourism in Riangsunge Beach. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, surveys, and observations. The informants in this study were the former head of the TANPAR Pokdarwis, Pokdarwis members (2 people), 1 new manager, and 2 community leaders. The data obtained is then analyzed rationally based on certain logical thinking patterns. The results of the study show: 1). Community participation in the planning stage is very minimal; 2). Not involving the entire community in the implementation stage; 3). Community participation in decision-making is still very minimal; but 4). Community participation in the evaluation stage is considered quite high. Overall, in the tourism development process, the role of the government in this case the Government tourism office is still very dominant.

Keywords: community participation, tourist attractions, tourist attraction development.

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Introduction

Tourism destinations or tourist attractions have experienced significant development. In the development process, each destination tries to show the superiority of tourism products. The goal is to win the competition (Dwyer and Kim, 2003; Enright and Newton, 2005; Hudson, Ritchie, and Timur, 2004). The way to win the competition is through the best service quality so as to provide a quality experience to tourists (Crouch, 2011; Damanik, 2013). This dynamic leads to an increase in the number of tourists and length of stay (Hudson, Ritchie, and Timur, 2004). The development of a tourist destination or tourist attraction is influenced by many factors. One important factor is stakeholders. Stakeholders themselves consist of several elements, namely society or community, government, academics, business actors, and the media. These four elements are called pentahelix in other languages. Meanwhile, in relation to the success of tourism development, especially the implementation of sustainable tourism development, stakeholder support is important (McComb, Boyd & Boluk, 2017).

Riangsunge Beach a tourist destination in East Flores Regency, has been developing and developing in recent years. The development and development were carried out significantly by the Regional Government through the Tourism Office. The development in question includes gates, toilets, lopo-lopo, stages, homestays, parking lots, stalls for selling, and the installation of signs that say Riangsunge beach tourism. In addition, the Tourism Office also formed a Podkarwis consisting of local people. The name of this Pokdarwis is Tani Penggerak Pariwisata Riangsunge (TANPAR). Development and development aim to increase the number of visits.

In this development and development, the local community as one of the pentahelix models seems to be ignored. The Tourism Office seems to do everything independently without involving the community. The absence of the community in the process of developing the Riangsunge Beach tourist attraction is correlated with community participation in the development itself.

Therefore, a study of local community participation in the development and construction of Riangsunge Beach as a tourist attraction is important to do. Based on these considerations, the author conducted a study to examine local community participation in the development and construction of Riangsunge Beach as a tourist attraction to be urgent.

A tourist destination is a place that is the destination of tourists in carrying out tourism activities. What is meant by a place in an area, city, region, province, or country. A place must have certain limitations such as tourist attractions, supporting facilities, tourism or facilities, infrastructure, and most importantly management (Nurdin, 2019:4). In addition, a tourist destination must-have elements of tourist attraction such as natural beauty (beaches, mountains, rice fields, and rivers), tourist facilities (transportation, information centers, toilets, restaurants, and tour guides), public facilities (places of worship, financial facilities, and health facilities), and accessibility (Prasiasa, 2013).

Meanwhile, according to Law No. 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, a tourist destination is a geographical area located in one or more administrative areas in which there are tourist attractions, public facilities, tourism facilities, accessibility, and communities that are interrelated and complement the realization of tourism.

In relation to tourist destinations, Nurdin (2019:5) divides them into two categories. First, tourist destinations that "do not have" administrative boundaries are tourist destinations that only have certain administrative boundaries or are located within two or more administrative boundaries. Second, tourist destinations that have administrative boundaries are tourist destinations that have administrative area boundaries.

In developing tourist destinations, community participation is needed. The concept of community participation in tourism development has so far revealed more involvement of the community from groups that have capital, financial access, and skills, members of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), community leaders, and private sector actors in the tourism industry (Blackstock 2005; Cruz, 2005; Idajati 2016; Kaharuddin, 2016; Kaharuddin, et al., 2020).

According to Sumarto as quoted by Sembodo (2006:21) participation is a process that allows for better interaction between stakeholders. The impact of this process is to provide innovative agreements and actions, where there is space to listen, learn, and start a joint action. Meanwhile, in Law Number 25 of 2004 (explanation of Article 2 paragraph 4 letter d) community participation is translated as community involvement to accommodate their interests in the process of preparing development plans.

In the context of development, Adisasmita (2006:38) said that community participation is the involvement and involvement of community members in development, including activities in the planning and implementation of development programs/projects carried out in the local community. Community participation or role in development is the actualization of the availability and willingness of community members to sacrifice and contribute to the implementation of programs/projects.

Meanwhile, the forms of community participation cover all stages of development. Abu (2008) put forward five forms of participation, namely participation of ideas given by participants in meetings or conferences, participation of energy given by participants in various village development improvement activities or assistance for other people, participation of property given by people in various activities for development improvement in the form of money, participation of skills and expertise to encourage forms of business or industry and participation as a sign of community.

Meanwhile, Ndraha (1990) classifies six (6) forms of participation, namely: participation through contact with other parties as the starting point of social change, participation in paying attention to and responding to information (receiving, obeying, fulfilling, implementing), participation in development planning including decision making, participation in the implementation of development operations, participation in assessing development, namely community involvement in assessing the extent to which development implementation is in accordance with the plan. This shows that participation in development includes all stages from planning, implementation, and supervision to performance assessment.

In addition, there are also other opinions related to the form of participation. It is said that there are four (4) forms of participation. First, participation in decision-making needs to be fostered through the opening of forums that allow the community to participate directly in decision-making. Second, participation in the implementation of activities is interpreted as the equalization of community contributions in the form of labor, and cash that will be received by the community concerned. Third, participation in monitoring and evaluating development in this case community participation in collecting information related to the development of activities and the behavior of development officials. Fourth, participation in the utilization of development results is the most important element (Mardikanto and Soebianto, 2015; Mustanir and Lubis, 2017).

Moreover, the community participation model is community participation in the process of identifying problems and potentials in the community, selecting and making decisions regarding a problem, implementing efforts to overcome it, and community involvement in the evaluation process. The factors that influence community participation include internal factors including: age, gender, level of education, length of residence, type of work, and amount of income. Meanwhile, external factors include: active facilitators, the intensity of socialization, influence of external society (Sunarti, 2003).

Methodology

The research location is Riangsunge Beach, Ritaebang Village, West Solor District, East Flores Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. This beach has been designated by the East Flores Regency Government as a tourist attraction. Since the status was determined, development has begun. Facilities such as toilets, lopo, homestays, stalls, gates, parking lots, and stages were built. This research was conducted for 6 months from March to August 2024. The informants in this study were the former head of the TANPAR Pokdarwis, Pokdarwis members (2 people), 1 new

manager, and 2 community leaders. Informants were determined using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling means the participants are selected based on certain criterias (Creswell, 2014).

This research was approached using a qualitative descriptive research method. Qualitative descriptive is data collected from interviews, field notes, and personal documents, not statistical analysis in the form of numbers. In relation to the research method, Moleong (2012:6) states that the qualitative research method is research that intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject, for example, behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others holistically, and by means of description in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods. The purpose of the descriptive method is to create a description, picture, or painting systematically, factually, and accurately regarding the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena being investigated (Nazir, 2005:54). Primary data collection techniques are carried out by: 1) In-depth interviews; asking questions to sources that can provide factual information related to the problems to be studied. 2) Survey; observing and making factual and systematic notes regarding the phenomena of the object being studied both directly and indirectly.

Results and discussions

Results

Participation in Planning

Planning is a process involving efforts made to anticipate future trends and determine appropriate strategies to realize organizational targets and goals. Activities in planning include: (1) determining target markets, formulating strategies to reach these target markets, determining the resources needed, and determining standards/indicators of success in achieving goals and target markets, and (2) involvement of local communities, especially related to identifying problems or issues, identifying development potential, analyzing, and forecasting future environmental conditions, developing alternative plans and facilities.

In the study, it was found that the community participates by providing suggestions, advice, and criticism through meetings held. The community participates by providing suggestions, advice, and criticism through meetings held. The participation of the Riangsunge community in the tourism development planning stage is involved in socialization activities carried out by the East Flores Regency government. The socialization agenda is to explain the government's plan to develop Riangsunge Beach as a tourist attraction. The socialization was attended by community leaders, traditional leaders, and the Rangsunge community. However, the results of the study also showed that the community was never asked for their opinion regarding the development concept that would be carried out at Riangsunge Beach. This was conveyed by Mr. Ebit Keban the former head of the TANPAR Pokdarwis when interviewed on April 13, 2024.

"At that time we were invited to participate in the socialization but without being asked for our opinion regarding the concept of development and development".

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the participation of the Ritaebang Village community, especially the Riangsunge environment, was very minimal in the planning stage.

Participation in Implementation

Participation is one form of involvement of a person or group of people in doing something. The participation of the Riangsunge community in the implementation stage can be explained as follows. First, the community is entrusted as the manager of Riangsunge Beach. As managers, the community forms a tourism awareness group. The name of the podarwis is Tani Penggerak Pariwisata Riangsunge (TANPAR). The head of the Pokdarwis is Mr. Ebit Keban. The members of the Pokdarwis are all adult residents of the Riangsunge environment. The management structure is like an organization in general. The Pokdarwis has a clear work program. The work program in question is to determine a clean day every week. In addition, the Pokdarwis also determines the ticket sales officers. They also hold regular meetings. This was conveyed by the head of Pokdarwis, Mr. Ebit Keban on April 13, 2024, and was confirmed again by a member of Podarwis, Mr. Arnol Keban in an interview on April 14, 2024.

"Every Friday, we do social services. We clean the Riangsunge beach location routinely."

The results of the study also showed that the Pokdarwis did not last long. Management was questioned due to the lack of transparency in managing incoming money. Due to this condition, the local government through the tourism office intervened. The Pokdarwis were disbanded and management was handed over to two residents. With limited experience, both of them managed Riangsunge Beach. Under the management of these two people, the face of Riangsunge Beach was better recognized by the community. Both of them planted trees and plants that beautified Riangsunge Beach.

Meanwhile, the government is building facilities such as lopo, entrance gate, ticket guard post, bathroom, homestay, stage, sales place/stalls, and seating and parking area.

Participation in Decision Making

Regarding community participation in decision-making, the research results show that the Riangsunge community is not very involved in decision-making. The research results show that the community is not involved in decision-making for facility development, for example, its architectural design, facility layout and so on. More than that, the community is not involved in decision-making related to the tourism concept in that place. The government through the tourism office unilaterally makes decisions related to the concept of developing Riangsunge Beach tourism.

However, it must be admitted that when management is handed over to the last manager, both have participation in decision-making. The participation in question is the decision to plant types of plants in the Riangsunge beach area. More than that, it is participation in decision-making related to the distribution of proceeds from ticket sales. This was conveyed by Mr. Dami Kein the new manager in an interview on May 2, 2024.

"After we managed it, we started to dare to make decisions. For example, planting flowers and several other types of plants. The goal is to make it more beautiful".

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that in the participation of decision-makers, initially the community was not involved but over time, the manager was involved in decision-making.

Participation in Evaluation

Regarding participation in evaluation, the results of the study show that the Riangsunge community is involved in evaluation activities carried out by the tourism awareness group. Evaluations are usually carried out once a month internally by the tourism awareness group. Regarding internal evaluations, usually, the head of the Pokdarwis schedules the evaluation time. Sometimes evaluations are also carried out with the tourism office. Meanwhile, evaluations with the office are adjusted to the work visit schedule. All of this aims to evaluate tourism activities on Riangsunge Beach. This was conveyed by a member of the Pokdarwis, Mr. Bage Muda in an interview on April 14, 2024.

"For internal evaluations, usually the head schedules it. Meanwhile, with the office, we adjust it to the work visit schedule of the office employees".

In relation to community participation only in evaluations, of course, it raises questions. The answer to this question was answered in an interview with Mr. Tommy on April 15, 2025. The results of the interview showed that the community was considered not to understand tourism. The consequence was that they were only involved in the evaluation.

"We may be considered not to understand the concept of tourism so we are only involved in internal evaluations."

The results of the study also showed that in August 2024, there was a problem related to the land status at the Riangsunge Beach location. This condition resulted in tourism activities being temporarily suspended. The East Flores Regency Tourism Office was slow to respond to this problem. Evaluation activities were not carried out immediately. As a result, until today, tourism activities at Riangsunge Beach have been stopped.

Discussions

The current research findings reveal that community participation in the development of Riangsunge Beach tourism was minimal during the planning and decision-making stages, with residents primarily involved in passive roles such as attending socialization meetings without real influence on the development concepts. While the community was entrusted with implementation through the formation of a local tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), internal management issues and lack of financial transparency led to the group's dissolution and replacement by two individual managers. These new managers contributed actively by enhancing the beach's aesthetics and making limited decisions. In the evaluation phase, the community was involved in internal reviews, but broader decision-making remained centralized with the government, which perceived the community as lacking expertise in tourism. This top-down approach, combined with unresolved issues like land disputes and delayed governmental response, eventually led to the suspension of tourism activities at Riangsunge Beach.

Similar problems of community participations have also been identified in different regions. In Malawi, the local communities still have limited access to tourism information and tourism planning experts which lead them to have a problem regarding the lacks an appropriate decision-making structure that can facilitate efficient flow of management decisions to local communities (Bello, 2021). This problem could happen since the promoting public participation activities were not effective, and one solution which could be applied is extending the promotion period of public consultation forums to enable the local residents can be well informed in advance, which should boost the attendance rate (Mak, et al., 2017). Similar issue also

happened in developing country, in which most tourism planning is only concerned with developing facilities or infrastructure to facilitate physical access, while information access for local people in tourism planning is not provided which leads to community distrust toward the tourism planning (Reindrawati, 2023). Therefore, tourism planning should prioritize enhancing the internal capabilities of local communities, supporting the diversity of their economies, and preventing negative impacts, rather than emphasizing the economic expansion of the tourism sector, even when that growth stems from participatory and community-based initiatives (Sosa, 2024).

Conclusions

Tourism development is an effort by the government to advance the region. In developing tourist attractions, community participation is an important element that must be considered. Therefore, in developing tourism, local community participation is absolutely necessary.

Research related to community participation in the development of Riangsunge Beach as a tourist attraction in Riataebang Village can be concluded as follows. First, participation in planning. The results of the study show that community participation at this planning stage is still minimal. Second, participation in implementation. The results of the study show that the community initially participated through community service to clean Riangsunge Beach. However, after the Pokdarwis were disbanded, only two people were entrusted to manage it, and the community only became spectators. Third, participation in decision-making. The results of the study indicate that community participation at this stage is very limited. Decisions are dominated by the government in the development of Riangsunge Beach. Fourth, participation in evaluation. The results of the study indicate that community participation at the evaluation stage is quite good. This is evidenced by routine internal evaluations and evaluations with the tourism office. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that community participation in the development of Riangsunge Beach as a tourist attraction is still minimal. The government through the tourism office is too dominant so that community participation is very limited and minimal.

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