

Eco-spiritual tourism as alternative tourism in Taro Village: Opportunity and challenge

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges faced by Taro Village in developing eco-spiritual tourism. The data in this study were collected through observation, interviews with key informants determined based on purposive sampling and documentation. The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis to obtain a complete picture of the opportunities and challenges faced by Taro Village as a village that develops eco-spiritual tourism. There are various opportunities that have been empowered such as high visits to several objects, support from the government and local communities as religious communities who uphold the sacred value of nature, and the attention of educational institutions realized through training to improve human resources. However, Taro Village still faces various challenges in its development such as the community does not have the same understanding of the vision of the Eco-spiritual village, community involvement has not been maximized because the majority of the community are farmers and consider tourism as a side job, weather with quite high rainfall often hampers tourist activities, which are mostly conducted in the open space, such as activities in traditional villages, in particular "metekap", "melukat", and firefly attractions. From these opportunities and challenges, it can be suggested that Taro Village should identify and evaluate opportunities and challenges on a regular basis, determine the target market with certain demographic characteristics, learning from competitors to improve product quality to compete, Preserving the quality of nature and the readiness of human resources in sustainable tourism in Taro Village.

Keywords: challenges, eco-spiritual, opportunities, tourism village

History Article: Submitted 15 July 2021 | Revised 19 July 2021 | Accepted 8 September 2021

How to Cite: Yuni, L.K.H.K. (2021). Eco-Spiritual Tourism as Alternative Tourism in Taro Village: Opportunity and Challenge. *Journal of Applied Sciences in Travel and Hospitality*, 4(2), 67-76.

Introduction

WTO (1999) in (Pitana & Diarta, 2009) stated that tourism is a human activity that travels to and lives in destination outside of their daily environment. Seen from a broader perspective of life, tourism has enormous potential in strengthening and improving the quality of relations between humans and between nations. It results to mutual understanding and better social cohesion, mutual respect, friendship, solidarity, and nationalism which can be established to world peace level. The increasing level of education of the world's population, especially in major tourism areas, and the effects of globalization have led to an increase in people's interest not only in foreign cultures, but also in local heritage. This encourages a process of localization, which is manifested in the fact that local communities seek to create new identities, serve, and promote their own heritage. The development of new identities, images, as well as the preservation and promotion of languages, traditions, and other characteristics of local communities are created to establish quality tourism products (Jovicic, 2016)

In addition to the advantages of the tourism industry above, tourism also can cause negative impacts on the environment such as to the physical, biotic, and sociocultural environment. Tourism is recognized to bring tremendous economic and social benefits because considered a savior, jobs provider and increase Gross Domestic Product. However, it can also be a source of serious problems in economic development specifically large economic leaks, including the profanation of sacred community values, fading customs, marginalization of underprivileged groups of people, value degradation, and changes in community behavior that are no longer in

accordance with local community values (Sunaryo, 2013). In the early 1980s in Europe, especially Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, the term used to indicate a new form of tourism was "soft tourism" as a form of concern for environmental problems and promoting environmentally friendly development (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017). Alternative tourism is related to sustainable tourism which includes efforts to maintain ecological integrity and diversification, fulfill basic human needs, open options for future generations, reduce injustice and increase self-determination for local communities (Arismayanti, 2015).

From a historical perspective, Taro Village is one of the old villages in Bali which was formerly known as Bhumi Sarwada. This village becomes a historical legend because it is linked to the holy journey of Maha Rsi Markandeya from Mount Raung, East Java to Balidwipa. One of the historical heritages that are still found to this day is the Kahyangan Jagat Temple, Pura Agung Gunung Raung and the existence of "Duwe Lembu Putih" (sacred white ox) which is sanctified by the people of Taro Village.

Geographically and administratively, Taro Village is one of 7 villages in Tegallalang District, Gianyar Regency. Topographically, Taro Village, Tegallalang District, Gianyar Regency is a sloping area with an altitude of 600 to 750 meters above sea level. The rainfall is relatively wet with administrative boundaries as follows: North side is bordered by Abuan Village, Kintamani district, Bangli regency. East side is bordered by Sabtu Village, Tegallalang district. In the south bordered by the village of Bresela, Payangan district, on the west side is bordered by Puhu Village, Payangan district. The area of Taro Village is 13,083 km² which administratively divided into 14 official banjars/ sub-village.

The economic structure of Taro Village is still an agrarian pattern which focuses on the agricultural sector. This is supported using agricultural land which still has the largest portion as much as 68% and rice is a core commodity in addition to other supporting sectors, namely trade, home industry and the tourism sector.

The existed tourism potential which will be developed constantly into the tourist attraction can support the local community's economy, including nature tourism, religious tourism, and cultural tourism. They are categorized as ecotourism which becomes the foundation in tourism development in Taro Village. In addition to its natural potential, public awareness to develop Taro Village into a tourist destination is shown by the community's commitment to form a tourism awareness group in collaboration with village officials. As the result of this, in 2017 this village procured the Governor's decree with the Gianyar Regent's Decree No. 429/E-02 /HK/2017 as a tourism village.

Taro Tourism Village takes another form in developing the potential of its natural and cultural wealth by claiming to be eco-spiritual tourism. Skolimowski (1992) clearly shows his ecological view of the noble values of the natural environment as a holy and sacred basic substance.

In the development of alternative tourism, especially ecotourism, humans play an important role in maintaining the nature's sacredness by developing positive attitudes to protect nature that has noble values. However, maximum community involvement is a challenge for ecotourism development because the community is still the object of tourism development. On the other hand, the national achievement achieved by the Taro Tourism Village as the first winner at the national level as the best tourist village in Indonesia becomes great opportunity to be better known in the wider community. The pride and confidence of the community to focus more on developing this village becomes great strength in the future (www.Taro.Desas.id, 2021).

Although Taro village has various potentials in the form of nature, spiritualism based on Hinduism and the support of its people, it still faces several challenges in the development of eco-spiritual tourism. By analyzing the existed various opportunities and challenges, solutions and recommendations can be found to achieve the vision and goals of eco-spiritual development which brings maximum benefits to local communities and tourism sustainability.



Figure 1. Map of Taro Village

Ecotourism

According to Sharpley (2002), sustainable development is a collaboration of the English words, "development" and "sustainability". One of the parties who gave a conceptual formulation about it was the World Commissions for Environmental and Development (WCED). It is stated that sustainable development is development that ensures the fulfillment of the needs of each generation without compromising the subsequent generation.

Alternative tourism is tourism that appears to minimize the negative impacts of mass tourism developments that have occurred to date (Budiastuti et al., 2010) The negative impact of mass tourism or large-scale tourism is a threat to cultural preservation where culture is more commercialized than maintained its authenticity and sustainability. Further, alternative tourism variations can be divided into three parts, one of which is nature tourism, which focuses on studies and observations related to flora (plants) and fauna (animals) as well as landscape activities and ecotourism is one form of alternative tourism that has very different characteristics from conventional tourism (Holden, 1984). In recent years in Indonesia, ecotourism has contributed to 45% of the total tourism revenue, as the result of this, the development of ecotourism is improved to protect forests and support traditional communities to generate sources of income for sustainable development (Choi et al., 2020)

Eco-Spiritual

Pilgrimage is a form of tourism that has existed since the past (Terzidou et al., 2008) Herntrei & Peclaner (2011) said that tourism occurs because of a trend of spiritual travel, and Melchar (2009) said that art and culture, as well as religion are factors that motivate spiritual journeys, Haq and Jackson (2006). Eco-Spiritual position is between pilgrimage and tourism so that spiritual tourists are a combination of religious and secular tourists (Avenzora & Teguh, 2013)

"Eco-spiritual" is taken from the words "ecology" and "spiritual" which has been absorbed in Indonesia becomes 'ekologi'. The word " ekologi " if interpreted in terms, it means harmonization of relations among all natural inhabitants. This eco-spiritual vision is manifested in the following actions: (1) realizing the natural environment as the source of life for all creatures in the world, including animals and humans. This awareness of the basic values of the natural environment will make people appreciate nature, respect nature, and be tolerant to nature. (2) doing a minimalist movement in everyday life. It is enough for humans to take only a few benefits from nature without the projection of extreme lust to control it, (3) dare to criticize development activities that do not support the goodness of the natural environment, (4) develop a spiritual relationship with the environment because the natural environment needs to be seen as a spiritually valuable reality and encourage human beings to appreciate the holiness, sacrosanct, and intrinsic sacredness inherent in it (Fios, 2013)

Another study revealed that the challenges of developing ecotourism occur in India as a country with most of the Hindu population who both regard cows as a symbol of sacredness in

their culture (Shenoy, 2016). The behavior of leaving cows roaming the side of the road and eating garbage is something that is no longer respect the value of culture. In addition to this, another challenge for the development of ecotourism in India is the influence of British colonialism which has weakened Hindu religious traditions. Moreover, challenges from the government which considers rituals on the Gangga river to cause pollution and garbage so that the decline in Hindu traditions is most visible in New Delhi, a metropolitan area.

Tourism Opportunities

According to there are two formats that a person might do to recognize opportunities, namely (1) See-do-get, where someone who sees (see) opportunities to be implemented (do) becomes a profitable (profit / success) business (gets) and (2) Do-see-get, where someone engages (do) in a business, then finds (see) a new profitable business opportunity (get). The analysis of the research based on the conditions and factors which become opportunities for eco-spiritual development in Taro Village without ignoring the challenges encountered in its development. (Ambadar et al., 2020)

Methodology

This research was conducted in Taro Village, Tegalalang District, Gianyar Regency. This study is descriptive study intended to provide an overview of the opportunities that allow it to be developed to improve the local community's economy and preserve nature and culture. These are the goals of developing alternative tourism and overcoming internal or external challenges.

Primary data in this study was the results of interviews regarding the opportunities and challenges faced in the development of eco-spiritual in Taro Village. It was supported by secondary data in the form of number of visits and data on tourism potential in Taro Village. The technique of collecting data was through observation and in-depth interviews with purposive sampling technique by determining informants who have certain criteria consisting of one head of the tourism awareness group (pokdarwis), head of the village (one person), tourist attraction managers (2 persons), community (2 persons), and three tourists. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis by describing and interpreting the data regarding the threat and opportunities obtained from observation and interviews. Next, they are identified specifically and then presented using descriptive narration.

Results and Discussions

The following is the identification of the potential ecotourism developed in Taro Village, which can be seen in the following Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. Map of tourism potential in Taro Village in 2021

No	Natural Tourism	Cultural/spiritual tourism	Location
1	Air Terjun Yeh Pikat	–	Banjar Taro Kaja
2	–	Penglukatan Semara Ratih	Banjar Taro Kaja
3	–	White ox tourism object	Banjar Taro Kelod
4	DTunggir Natural Park	–	Banjar Pakuseba
5	–	Delod Sema traditional village	Banjar Taro Kelod
6	–	Gunung Raung temple	Banjar Taro Kelod
7	Fireflies conservation	–	Banjar Taro Kelod

(Source: processed data, 2021)

Table 2. Potential of tourism support facilities in Taro Village in 2021

No	Tourism Facilities	Types
1	Tegal Wedangga	Rest Area
2	Tegal Dukuh Camp	Camping Ground
3	Komang Petak	Home Stay
4	Jero Mangku House	Home stay
5	Moringga	Rest Area

(Source: processed data, 2021)

As a new tourist village, Taro tourism village has succeeded in attracting tourist visits which can be seen in the Table 3 below:

Table 3. Data on tourist visits to Taro Village In 2020

No	Object and Tourism Attraction	Number of Visit (people)
1	Tegal Wedangga rest Area	430
2	Dtunggir Natural Park	294
3	Yeh Pikat River Trekking & waterfall	30
4	Semara Ratih & Delod sema Village	110.887
5	Tegal Dukuh Camp	320
6	The Fire Flies Garden	1553
7	Objek wisata Lembu putih	1383
8	Komang Petak Homestay	30
9	Jero Mangku House	—
10	Moringga	149
Total		15.076

(Source: processed data, 2021)

The analysis of opportunities in developing tourist attractions in Taro Tourism Village:

1. White Ox Tourism Object

The main attraction of this White ox tourist attraction is the habitat of 56 (fifty-six) white oxen which are included in the type of spiritual tourism. It is believed to be a rare and sacred species because it is the embodiment of Lord Shiva, so that it is sacred by the local community. The White ox tourist attraction is also a place for forest conservation with the development of rare plants, medicinal plants, and upakara plants so that it won the Kalpataru award in 2017.

The accessibility to this tourist attraction is adequate because it can be passed by various vehicles from two wheels to buses. There are outbound facilities, camping, playgrounds, and restaurants, and a very ample parking space.

The analysis of opportunities that make this tourist attraction can be further developed, such as:

- (a) The interest of local tourists visiting this object is quite high compared to other tourist attractions even during the pandemic. It does not reduce the number of tourists visiting this white ox tourist attraction.
- (b) There are supporting objects and other tourist attractions in Taro Village area, which is very close to White Ox tourist attraction.
- (c) The tendencies of tourists who come here are for some reasons, such as religious activities and healing non-medical diseases. This has been maintained for generations which becomes opportunity to preserve the ecotourism.
- (d) Support from the village government through the existence of institutional village enterprises which facilitates the existence of ecotourism in various forms, including counseling and increasing human resource capacity.

The challenges encountered in the development of white ox tourism object, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as:

- (a) Managers face difficulties in providing forage for cattle, which currently 56 oxen. This is because the Safari Elephant Park Management can no longer support the cost of feeding, so that this burden is only borne by the people of Taro Kaja Village.
- (b) The decrease in the number of visitors during the 1.5 year of Covid-19 pandemic has become a very immense challenge which result to the decline of the revenue in this tourist attraction.
- (c) The lack of promotion programs that only rely on village websites which have not been able to increase the expected number of tourist visits.



Figure 2. White Ox in Taro village



Figure 3. Large space at White Ox Tourism Object

2. Delodsema Traditional Village

Other activities that tourists can do in this traditional village are self-purification/ "melukat" in a shower called "Semara Ratih" which has two showers. Moreover, this village also has local products produced by the local community that can be enjoyed by the community and studied by tourists. They can even be used as souvenirs such as "loloh" (herbal drink), coconut oil, snacks in the form of chips, gold and silver crafts, sculpture, and painting.

Analysis of the Opportunities of Delodsema Traditional Village as ecotourism in Taro Tourism Village, such as

- (a) It is the most striking attraction for tour operators and tourists to visit compared to other attractions in Taro Village
- (b) The existence of maintained traditional houses which become the main cultural attraction that distinguishes this place from other attractions in Taro Village. Most attractions in this village are natural attractions
- (c) full involvement of the homeowner community to serve and interact with tourists who come, provide direct benefits for both tourists and homeowners. The activity of "metekap" (traditional plowing of rice fields) provides an unforgettable hands-on experience for tourists. Learning the process of making coconut oil traditionally gives tourists a special experience and satisfaction. Teaching how to make ceremonial means in the form of "canang" is given to tourists as an effort to introduce the faith and beliefs of the local community as well as the deep philosophical meaning of Hindu ritual means. The activity ended with enjoying a traditional drink (loloh) and pure coconut water picked directly from the tree which add value for visitors.

The challenges faced by managers are

- (a) Road facilities or access to this tourist attraction are still inadequate and in the form of loam that tends to be damaged and muddy when it rains so that it is quite disturbing for

visitors' comfort. In addition to this, the lack of village funds is a hindrance in improving road access to this place.

- (b) Weather with high rainfall is also a task in running outdoor tourist activity.



Figure 4. Delodsema traditional village



Figure 5. Pengelukatan Semara Ratih

3. Firefly Tourism Objects

Fireflies have become tourist attraction because of their beauty at night, and this object is the only one in Bali. As a result of this, the number of visits reached around ten thousand people throughout 2020. (Interview results, 2020). In addition to being a tourist attraction, this place is a means to educate the public and tourists that maintaining and preserving the environment without the use of chemicals will preserve nature and the environment so that nature will return its benefits.

The analysis of opportunities for firefly conservation tourism objects include:

- (a) Support and cooperation with educational institutions, especially in the field of research in an effort to preserve long-term existence of fireflies.
- (b) Community commitment through tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) in developing this tourist attraction in particular educates the community to preserve their nature continuously to attract tourists with special interest
- (c) The support of Village fund in the development of this tourist attraction in the form of increasing the capacity of human resources and governance systems
- (d) Concern of various parties including educational institutions that are regularly provide independent training for the development of human resources including governance systems, guidance and financial reporting systems.

The challenges faced:

- (a) The number of visitors who visit firefly tourist attraction is still minimal, apart from being relatively new, the media and promotional activities also have not been maximized. The unavailability of sufficient marketing funds is a challenge so that the impact on the number of visits has not been maximized.
- (b) Community involvement is also not maximized because the community considers the management of tourism objects as a side job in addition to their main work namely farming and cultivate an unirrigated field.



Figure 6. Firefly tourism object

With various opportunities, Taro Village also faces challenges in its development, including:

- (a) The community has not had the same understanding of the eco-spiritual vision carried out by Taro Tourism Village so that the village government and tourism awareness groups feel the need to make more intensive efforts to provide socialization to the community.
- (b) Community involvement in the development of tourist villages is still not maximized because the majority of them are farmers and consider tourism as a side job that is not their main focus.
- (c) Weather with high rainfall often hampers tourist activities, which are mostly carried out in the open space, especially the attraction of fireflies.

Conclusions

Taro tourism village has a lot of natural and cultural potential and has been developed into a tourist village since 2017. With those various potentials and natural resources, this place has been developed into an Eco-Spiritual village. Based on the religious values adopted by the community, this village develops types of tourism that is responsible for nature includes: White ox tourist attraction, Delod Sema traditional village, "Penglukatan Semara Ratih", and firefly conservation tourism objects. The development vision of this Taro tourist village is as an Eco-Spiritual Village. In its development, analysis of opportunities and challenges is very important because by conducting identification and analysis, sustainable goals and development as an eco-spiritual tourist attraction will be realized.

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that Taro Village offer various opportunities as Eco-spiritual village include: (1) tour operators and tourists like to visit this place even in a pandemic because the characteristics of this tourist attraction are spiritual tourism, especially the White ox tourist attraction. (2) The maintenance of customs and traditional culture is shown by the presence of traditional houses, especially in Banjar Delodsema (3) Full involvement of the homeowner community to serve and interact with tourists who come, providing direct benefits for both tourists and homeowners. The activity of "metekap" (traditional plowing of rice fields)

provides an unforgettable direct experience for tourists, (4) The national achievement achieved by Taro Tourism Village as the first runner-up at the national level as the best tourist village in Indonesia is a great opportunity to be better known in Indonesia, (5) There are many objects and attractions in Taro Village that becomes preference to tourists when visiting Taro Village, (6) The tendency of tourists who come to this place is to carry out religious activities, both wounding and healing a disease that is believed to be non-medical. This is an opportunity to preserve and maintain the characteristics of the white ox tourist attraction as one of ecotourism, (7) local community support, (8) support from the village government through the existence of BUMDes (village-owned enterprises) which facilitates the existence of this ecotourism in the form of counseling and capacity building of human resources (9) Community commitment through tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) in developing this attraction, in particular educating the community to maintain natural sustainability with the target of attracting special interest tourists, (10) Concern for various parties including educational institutions that routinely provide independent training for the development of human resources, including the system of governance, guidance, and system of recording financial statements.

However, opportunities that Taro Tourism Village has and its development which is relatively new, face several challenges, including (1) The community has not had the same understanding of the eco-spiritual vision carried out by the Taro Tourism Village so that the village government and tourism awareness groups feel the need to do more intensive efforts to provide socialization to the community (2) Community involvement in the development of tourist villages is still not maximized because the majority of them are farmers and consider tourism as a non-essential activity, (3) Weather with high rainfall often hinders tourist activities in traditional village, especially "metekap" (plowing the fields), melukat (self-purification in the shower), and firefly attractions.4. The lack of village funds and financial support from the government to develop this place such as in providing food for white ox and improving adequate road facilities, especially in Delodsema Traditional Village, is an obstacle to the development of Eco spiritual tourism in Taro Village. Moreover, it is not widely known due to the limited promotional media which is only organized through Taro tourist village website and there is no collaboration with travel agents to promote this village through tour packages.

The existence of these challenges shows that Taro tourism village community still requires maximum efforts in developing their village. It can be done by conducting socialization and a more intensive approach to the community to build the same commitment in developing Taro Village into eco-spiritual tourism. Cooperation with tourism actors is also very important aspect to assist in maximizing promotions so that they are better known in the eyes of the wider community. Furthermore, allocation of sufficient funds is necessary to improve road facilities for the convenience of tourists visiting Taro Village, especially to Delod Sema Traditional Village.

Suggestion

By looking at the numerous opportunities and challenges encountered by the Taro Tourism Village in developing Eco-Spiritual Tourism, it is crucial to take steps and prudent planning as outlined in a strategic plan. The strategic plan is expected to be beneficial to evaluate its internal potential to maximize its strengths and overcome its challenges. The strategic plan is carried out by:

1. Identifying opportunities and challenges regularly to observe its development and evaluation. For example, how the growth of visits will increase or decrease and what are the causes of the decline.
2. Determining the target market or consumers. For example, market segmentation/ consumer education is determined to maintain firefly conservation. For white ox, a special market segmentation can be determined, namely the pilgrimage/spiritual tourist market.
3. Learning from competitors. Determining other objects as competitors is very helpful to spur the improvement of product quality to compete properly. It is based on the observation showed that most of the visits to several objects and facilities in Taro Village are still minimum.
4. Maintaining and preserving the excellence of nature which becomes the leading attraction and capital which is very valuable for the sustainability of community culture. The existence

of human resources as the main capital in sustainable tourism in Taro Village also needs attention through counseling and guidance for the younger generation. It is accomplished to achieve the vision of the Eco-Spiritual Tourism concept specifically nature and spirituality balance through tourism activities. The findings of this study are still limited to recommendations related to the opportunities and challenges faced by several tourist attractions in Taro Village, therefore it is expected that future research can analyze the positioning of Taro Village as Eco-Spiritual and its development strategy.

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