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LOCAL COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARD SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM CASE STUDY OF NUSATOURISM VILLAGE IN ACEH

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Abstract

Studies related to sustainable rural tourism have been attracting researcher interest due to the many benefits it provides for not only host community but also for all stakeholders of rural tourism such as tourists, tour operators and tourism business managers. The aim of this study is to understand the attitudes of local community in improving rural tourism sustainability in Aceh. The study employs qualitative research design and utilized the insightful case study approach to comprehend the issues of local community attitudes on sustainable rural tourism. Particularly, the intrinsic case study is chosen to explore the study because Nusa tourism village has been successfully practicing rural tourism business and becomes the fastest growing tourism village in Aceh. In addition Nusa tourism village also can become a role model for other tourism villages in Aceh for its unique qualities and supports of its local leaders and communities, also the strong

positive impact its provide for local community. This study will construct practical knowledge that can be applied throughout tourism villages with the same level of requirements and situations.

Keywords

Local Community, Attitudes, Sustainable, Rural Tourism and Impact

1. Introduction

It is inevitably true that without supportive attitudes from local community rural tourism will never gain any success in any region because local community is key player in rural tourism activities. According to Maksimović, Urošević and Damjanović, (2015) rural tourism is “a form of tourism where the local community is the main actor who is in charged, and involvement in its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remains within the community”. Therefore, rural tourism is also called by community base tourism because local community play a vital role in rural tourism activities. Community-based tourism has been actively promoted in many parts of the world especially in Asian countries, such as in Thailand, Cambodia, Mongolia, Malaysia, and Indonesia (May-Chiun, Ramayah & Lee, 2014). In addition the supportive attitude of local community apparently will improve the rural tourism productivity and continue it in the future. As mentioned by Choi and Sirakaya (2006) that local communities’ attitudes and perceptions toward tourism development are one of the most important indicators for sustainable tourism development. Accordingly, rural tourism as one type of tourism, also attracts researcher attention because it provides a new alternative of income generating, solve unemployment problems and at the same time preserve the cultural and social heritage and environment in rural areas (Shahab and Hashemi, 2016).

The government of Aceh starts promoting rural tourism massively by the year 2012 when the newly elected chief of the Cultural and Tourism Board was an academic practitioner from one of the best universities in Aceh. He, for the first time, launched rural tourism namely Lubok Sukon tourism village which became the icon of rural tourism in Aceh. Unfortunately, the activities of tourism in this village are considered passive. However, other new rural tourism were born and one of the most stable tourism village in Aceh is Nusa tourism village which continuously promoting and practicing rural tourism. Until now there are about 83 rural tourism with different types of attraction based on each village’s potential competitive advantages that is

registered in Cultural and Tourism Board of Aceh with the possibility to increase in the future. (Aceh Cultural and Tourism Board, 2018).

For the past several years, most Acehnese who live in rural area are the most reluctant to receive tourists especially tourists from non Muslim countries. They believe that tourist will bring bad influence to their culture and standard of living as well as people's lifestyle. This view has gradually changed especially when the Tsunami hit Aceh on December 26, 2004. At this time, people around the world come to Aceh to deliver aids and assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the area. The Tsunami also brought a light on the peaceful agreement between The Acehnese Rebel Movement (GAM) who had been fighting for independence against the Indonesia authorities for years. The signing of the peace agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) in Helsinki, Sweden a year after the Tsunami on October 15, 2005 resulted in that Aceh remain as a province of Indonesia.

Local community at Nusa tourism village has been facing the same exact problem when dealing with tourist from non Muslim countries. They really reject them because the negative perspective that they have. However, this perception changed because they have been exposing to a positive impacts that a tourist can bring about to their life. This exposition mainly come from leaders and young generations who have better understanding about tourists of non Muslim country. Nusa tourism village attracts tourists because of the village simplicity which most of the villagers are from poor family. Most of the villagers are farmers and free lane workers. However, this village can become one of the most successfull tourism village in Aceh because of the local community supportive attitudes toward rural tourism. Until now they provide several tourism attractions such as; 33 homestay, souvernirs from recycle garbages, traditional art and dances performance, adventure/hiking, agrotourism for local and national student, traditional food service and Annual Nusa festival.

Eventhough, research on local community attitudes towards rural tourism in general has been well documented since several decades ago (Chia-pin, 2011) however, the currency of this study need to be update considering the continuous benefits it provides such as in Nusa village which has just enjoy the benefit of tourism village for about a few years. The reason given on understanding of residents' attitudes on tourism development because it can assure tourism governments and policy makers to have firm strategies for rural tourism sustainability. Therefore, it is hoped that if community can get advantages from rural tourism activities

therefore they will have supportive attitude on the other hand if local community perceive many disadvantages of rural tourism then they will reject the rural tourism. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to understand the attitudes of local community in improving rural tourism sustainability in Nusa tourism village Aceh. More specifically, objectives of this study are: to analyze local community attitude in improving rural tourism sustainability; to investigate the impact of rural tourism on local community. To achieve these objectives the study use qualitative method design and interview analysis tools to collect data and information from the respondent which are all stakeholder of rural tourism especially local community who play the main role as the most important stakeholder in rural tourism.

2. Literature Review

Literature on resident attitudes toward tourism has been well documented since few decades ago that make the study become firm among rural tourism scholars. Study of resident attitudes toward tourism can be traced back to the 1960s. It began with examining positive aspects of tourism impact in the 1960s, the negative aspects in the 1970s, and the systematic approach in the 1980s (Jafari, 1986). The currency of the study need to be updated regarding the many benefit it provide for all its stakeholders. Past studies refer attitudes as personality, character and intention behavior that are shown from people daily activity. According to Ajzen (1991), attitude is a positive or negative state of mind with regard to specific objects of groups. In this case the positive or negative perception and action of rural tourism that are performed by local community mostly. Attitude as one outcome of education and training can be developed and shared among communities. For example, people who already learn about tourists and tourism activities advantages will have more supportive attitude toward tourism activities in rural areas, therefore, they will accommodate tourism activities. In addition, studying community attitudes towards tourism would benefit tourism planners in developing suitable program that can be implemented in tourism village therefore local community will gain better quality of life. Especially local community attitude that is displayed with the way people communicate and interact each other that will really affect tourists intention and motivation to visit and revisit the place and by definition will continue the future of rural tourism.

Sustainability come from the word sustain which mean to continue and to maintain over a period of time. According to Gardetti and Torres (2016) sustainability is a concept that leads to

continuously change objectives and priorities since it is an open process and therefore, it is not fixed. Basically, the word sustainability concerns with environment and natural resources, as well as social and economic issues (Morpeth and Yan, 2015; Mowforth and Munt, 2009). Consequently, Swarbrooke (2000) explains that sustainable tourism is not just about protecting the environment; it is also concern with long term economic viability and social justice. Liu (2013) explains sustainable tourism that involves both the sustainable growth of tourism's contribution to the economy and society and the sustainable use of resources and environment. Based on these definitions I can conclude that sustainability mean to keep safe all potential that a place and community have, so that it will produce continuous benefits for all parties.

The issue of sustainability covers almost every sector that show how important it is for any industry who want to gain benefit from it. However, there are several reason for organization especially travel and tourism industry to adopt this concern (Gardetti and Torres, 2016), such as conscious consumers, increased government pressures, competitors actions, rising costs and the need to improve operational efficiencies. The process of identifying a sustainable tourism is not an easy task. It requires compatibility between the needs and resources of the local community, its residents and the tourists. All rural tourism stakeholders need to cooperate and work together to achieve the continuous positive impact of this business. Therefore, it is important to study rural tourism sustainability from multiple points of view and one of them is from stakeholders and other groups of people who utilize it base on their important need. Thus the concept of sustainability usually related to how the people in the business contribute to the development of a rural area continuously. Perhaps the question for the new rural development stakeholders is about prioritizing between the economic, conservation, environmental, social or even cultural interests and more about finding new ways of framing the challenges facing rural communities (McAreavey & McDonagh, 2011).

Dinis (2011) states that, the importance of sustainable tourism is mainly for preservation, survival and development of rural areas. The most important concerns related to sustainable rural tourism are regarding the economic, environment, and social cultural development of a rural area. Therefore, sustainable rural tourism aims to improve the quality of locals' life, reduce poverty, and social and environmental degradation. As mentioned by Petrović, Vujko, Gajić, Vuković, Radovanović, Jovanović, Vuković, (2017) that the goal of the sustainable rural tourism is focused primarily on environmental protection and the development of a local-global

partnership. Furthermore, rural tourism needs to be in harmony with the multiplicity of uses, needs and demands which characterize rural areas in order for it to be appropriated and potentially sustainable (Kantar and Svržnjak, 2017).

To achieve the ultimate goals of sustainable rural tourism, the first thing has to be explored are local community attitude as the most important key player. It is undoubtedly true that local community attitude can provide good or bad outcome of rural tourism activities. Barbe, Triay & Haufele (2015) suggest that, government involvement in the creation of specialized human resources is urgently needed in rural tourism as well as participation of university programs. In addition, Aslam & Awang (2015) suggests that socio-community of rural tourism enterprises has to cooperate with stakeholders and integrated rural resources holistically to produce sustainable rural tourism. The continuing growth in tourism has been stimulated by the emergence of new destinations around the world (Sharpley and Telfer, 2015). If tourism is to continuous making a positive contribution to sustainable rural tourism development, it is vital to have a better understanding of this dependence. (Amir, Ghapar, Jamal & Najiah, 2015).

3. Materials and Methods

This study employs qualitative research design and utilized the insightful case study approach to comprehend the issues of a new growing tourism village in Aceh that perceived support from local leaders and local community. Qualitative research is usually used to understand human behavior and the reason that govern such behavior by asking a broad question and collecting data in the form of words, images, video and so on, that is analyzed and searched for themes (Gallo, p.31, 2017). In addition, the use of case study approach is important to emphasis on context and dynamic interactions of people (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The intrinsic case study is chosen to explore the case because Nusa tourism village shows a great significant improvement and can become a role model for other tourism villages in Aceh for it unique qualities and supports of it local leaders and communities. Researcher as the main instrument plays an important role in qualitative study. Researcher experiences in human resource management field for about more than 10 years in Faculty of Economics and Business of Syiah Kuala University Banda Aceh, Indonesia is an essential asset to be a valid researcher. Furthermore, being a national trainer of tourism awareness in Aceh province convince the

educational and experience background to executed the research study. Validity and reliability are another important issues in qualitative studies.

To validate data and information trustworthiness, authenticity, and quality is crucial in qualitative study. Guidelines for observation as well as documents to be collected by the researcher were also developed to triangulate the qualitative data. Questions on the interview are validated by triangulation of data collection namely interview and observation and by triangulation of data analysis namely content analysis and constant comparative analysis. Furthermore, to get a more reliable instrument audit trail is also conducted since the beginning of the research explaining the researcher feelings, difficulties, hope, challenges, victories and lesson learnt while doing the study (Teng, 2008). Furthermore, some procedures and ethical code of conduct are applied for this study which purposes are to protect the researcher and the participants from unwanted legal problems. Basically, ethic is norms and value that precede the attitude of reseacher in conducting the research (Lebar, 2017). According to Miller, Birch, Mauthner and Jessop (2012, p.14) ethics deals with researcher morality in conducting the research. As we can say that moral is something related with doing right and wrong base on general acceptance.

Technique of data analysis used is content analysis and constant comparative. Content analysis means that analysis of textual data without any measurement but only describing the meaning of textual data (Boreus & Bergstrom, 2017). Interpretative content analysis is used to gather and analyse data through interview and observation (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis was the analysis of qualitative data from interviews, observational notes and documents from two selected districts. 19 respondents of different background (government officials, tourism industry managers, local community, tourists and academia from Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar have been interviewed to get more insightful data. After the interview was transcribed, then the next step is to code the emerging key words and ideas and analyze it using constant comparative method. Data reduction was then conducted to identify common themes and sub-themes. Researcher also used constant comparative method to analyse data. In constant comparative method data was recorded in form of matrix to find similarities and differences. Therefore conclusion can be made base on what is the most needed idea and proposed recommendation for government and policy maker base on those findings. Overall, the data analysis process is depicted in the diagram 1.

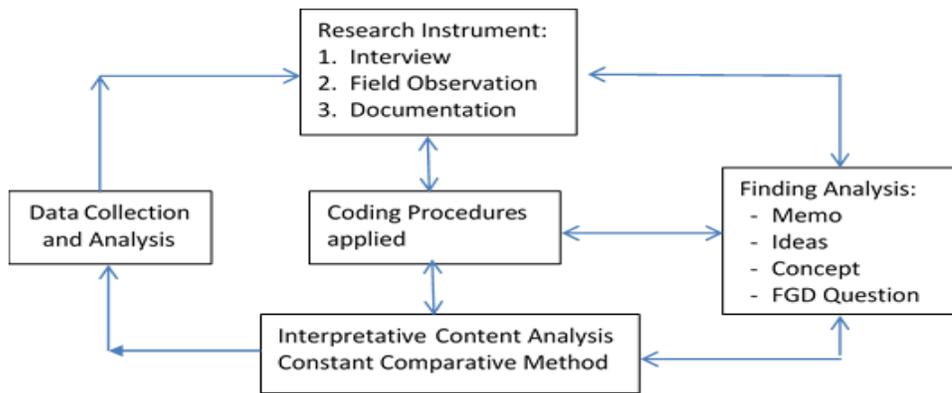


Figure 1: Data Analysis Process

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents answer and justification of each research question and sub-question along with the resulting data collected. The main purpose of the interview is to get answer of the three main research questions. The main purpose of this study is to understand local community attitude towards rural tourism sustainability that can generate benefits to destination areas and communities. To achieve the purposes, the study explored respondent's perception and expectations in regard to local community attitude and rural tourism sustainability. This will led to the understanding what kind of attitude empowerment that are suitable for community to sustain rural tourism in Aceh. Basically, this study attempts to seek answer to the two research questions. The research questions are:

1. What is the meaning of sustainable rural tourism?
2. How can local community attitudes improve sustainable rural tourism?

The first research question is "What is the meaning of rural tourism". It has three sub questions": what do you know about rural tourism; what does tourist look for in rural tourism; what is the role of local community in rural tourism. This question spark respondent's understanding of the basic rural tourism meaning and construct the themes for each sub-question. Respondent's answer differently because they have their own perspective due to the rural tourism practice in their village. Some villages that still conduct traditional life activities will promote the rural tourism base on their traditional life as a potential product and service in their tourism village. Other villages that have beautiful natural landscape will concentrate to preserve and protect their

natural environment. On the other hand villages that only have local community who do their routine job simply such as farming, gardening, fishery will promote their tourism product of what local people do to support their life.

Basically, researcher can sum up three themes of the sub question from recorded interview, which are: 1) Traditional and cultural base; 2) Promote people lifestyle; 3) preserve the natural environment. The concept of traditional and cultural life is clearly reflect from the statement of the Aceh government tourism officer who mentioned:

Usually, people traveled to village to enjoy cultural uniqueness and old tradition.

Where we can meet local people who do their routine work such as going to the farm with some distinct traditional tools and rituals.

It is in accordance with the respondent opinion from tour and travel business who mentioned the same meaning of the important of tradition and culture in rural tourism. He said:

Rural tourism in Indonesia promote the natural beauty only 30% the rest of it people sell culture and tradition as we are a country which are rich of traditional and cultural life.

Generally, tourists who come to village will look for something that unusual or cannot be seen in the urban life, as explained by the academia who mentioned that:

Local community aim to expose their daily life activities which depend very much on the richness of natural environment such as farming, feeding the chickens, goats, swimming in the river and other village's activities that cannot be found in the city's life.

The third theme of the first sub question of rural tourism understanding is the preservation of the natural environment. It is undoubtedly true that villages are rich of beautiful landscape such as mountains, beaches, jungle and lovely scenery. In the village people make the most use of the natural environment for their life such as farming and fishery. Without fertile soil to grow seed and without unpolluted sea water, local people cannot work for their life. Another participant support this statement by giving the same comment. And he also added something that has to be done to protect the environment especially from destruction so that those natural beauty will sustain forever.

I always amaze with the natural beauty of mountain and beaches in the village, if I traveled to tourism village I will look for something that I could not found in my

place. But I do care about the continuity of those beautiful places so that, I hope local community will protect them actively.

It can be said that most respondents have the same understanding about rural tourism meaning which are local community base traditional and cultural life. All rural activities are promoted as product and services of tourism that should be nurtured as naturally as possible to maintain its originality. The conclusion is the same as previous study from Snieška, Barkauskienė, & Barkauskas, 2014; Muresan, 2016.

The second research question is “How to improve sustainable rural tourism in Aceh”. It has two sub questions: How can local attitudes improve community’s cultural and traditional life, economics welfare, and natural environment; What are the positive and negative impact of rural tourism? These sub questions resulted in three themes which are: 1) Sustain the cultural and traditional life of local community; 2) improve local community economics welfare; 3) preserve the natural environment. These three themes are clearly defined by the respondents such as respondent from tourism business owner that said:

Local community should be empowered and prepared to run the tourism business, so that they can fully participate and support the rural tourism and can get maximum benefit from it.

Another respondent from academia who said about sustaining community’s cultural and traditional life by performing the traditional dances and promoting local people’s unique life, as she mentioned clearly that:

Local community should love to perform traditional dances and promote their unique life style to attract tourist to visit their village, so that it will provide economics benefits for them as positive impact.

Base on respondents answer about the second research question, this study conclude that local community should play significant role in sustaining rural tourism by concerning on the cultural and traditional life, economics welfare and environment preservation. Its in accordance with the statement from Liu (2013) who explains that sustainable tourism involves both the sustainable growth of tourism’s contribution to the economy and society and the sustainable use of resources and environment.

5. Conclusion

Finally, there are four results of this study, the first one is a summary of each interview which is an audio and written data managed carefully. The second is a list of provisional codes which is the beginning of the process of conceptualization. The third result is matrix of interview analysis. The fourth result consists of memos on empowerment of local community attitude in sustainable rural tourism which are: 1) Rural tourism should provide as much benefits for local community by empowering and preparing its people in term of their originality of life, culture, tradition and natural beauty; 2) Local community as the most important key player will support rural tourism if it create benefits or positive impact and if it will not spoil local culture and traditions as well as environment or negative impact; 3) Original culture and tradition of tourism village will promote uniqueness that can become new attraction and the best attraction in rural tourism is local lifestyle. As suggested in the literature review that rural tourism is activities mainly conducted in rural area that involved local community as a key player that preserve the originality of people life style, social and cultural tradition as well as conserve village natural beauty and uniqueness.

In conclusion local community attitude about rural tourism in Nusa tourism village is positive as long as it can maximize the positive impact such as improve local community's economics welfare, preserve local culture and tradition and minimize the negative impact such as environment damage. Furthermore, Nusa tourism village has been proving that rural tourism present an increase in local community economics income that make them care about the sustainability of rural tourism in their village. Therefore, this study will construct practical knowledge that can be applied throughout tourism village with the same level of requirements and situations. It is hope that the result of this study will give insight about rural tourism sustainability in Aceh Province. However the study only covers small number of respondents using qualitative approach therefore it is recommended that in the future the respondents can be expands and research design used can be quantitative. Thus, Aceh can get full picture about rural sustainability with the more solid findings from the two research method.

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