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Exploring Policy Recommendation to Develop Sustainable Tourism (Study in Lake Toba)

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Abstract

As one of the countries with the greatest tourism potential in Southeast Asia, Indonesia's tourism sector exerts influences on economic growth, society, and environment. Despite its potential for beneficial outcomes, prudent management by governmental entities is imperative to foster establishment of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is one of the targets mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically under point eight and twelve. Point eight, decent work and economic growth, will envisage the implementation of policies aimed at fostering sustainable tourism, with anticipated outcomes that extend to the realms of economy, society, and environment. On the other side, point twelve, pertaining consumption and production patterns, will advocate for sustainable practices across the entirety of the tourism value chain, encompassing transportation and accommodation. In this study, Lake Toba as one of the five super priority destinations in Indonesia will be the focus location of the research. Lake Toba was chosen considering its great potential of tourism attraction yet there is still a lot of need for development. With great potential of tourism, comes great potential in economic growth yet on the other side, incurring a great potential of negative impact on the social and environment sector. This study uses literature research methods with a qualitative approach that utilizes any sources to determine the challenges, opportunities, and also identifies the alternate effective policies to develop sustainable tourism in Lake Toba. The result of this study has recognized that policies to support sustainable transportation, empower local communities, and private intervention in green investment are highly needed. This study offers valuable perspective to policymakers and stakeholders, empowering them to take a role in fostering sustainable development within the tourism sector.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism; Sustainable Development Goals; Sustainable Transportation; Empowering Local Communities; Green Investment

1. Introduction

The framing of sustainable development has taken a crucial place over the focus of the tourism sector. Yet despite its importance, on the empirical study at the global scale, tourism is less sustainable (Hall, 2011). Sustainability over tourism has become a significant priority for government, foreign visitors, and businesses (Li et al, 2023). Sustainable tourism aims to achieve economically, socially, and ecologically responsible tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Moreover, it is important to balance the pivotal aspects of sustainable tourism which are economic growth, environmental protections, and social equity (Sharpley, 2020). With great tourism activities, the greater the economic benefits. At the same time, uncontrolled tourism and economic activities will affect other sectors such as the environment and society. Pollution, overused natural and cultural resources, disturbance on local communities and cultural heritage are some things that are inevitable if there is no policy that arranges sustainable tourism.

Certainly, sustainable tourism is mentioned as one of the targets in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically under point eight and twelve. Point eight (8), decent work and economic growth, specifically point 8.9 explain the objective to arrange policies aimed at fostering sustainable tourism by creating job occupancy and promoting cultural and local products. Point twelve (12), pertaining consumption and production patterns, will advocate for sustainable practices across the entirety of the tourism value chain, encompassing transportation and accommodation. In conclusion, a country that has a big potential in the tourism sector, needs to arrange policies that provide the target of SDGs over sustainable tourism in order to maintain the tourism growth and sustainability.

Furthermore, as an archipelago country, from Sabang to Merauke, Indonesia has so many tourism attractions based on natural beauty, culture, recreational places, and so many more. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) for the year ended 2022, within Southeast Asia, Indonesia ranked second in the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI). As in the world ranking, Indonesia ranked 32th which was an improvement from the past year 2021 that ranked 44th (Simangunsong & Tashandra, 2022). These information shows that Indonesia has a great potential in the tourism sector.

Based on the foreign tourist visits data, Bali is still the top choice for tourism activities. According to Statistics Indonesia, as of 2023, Bali has been visited 5,2 million times or equal to 65% of total foreign visitors from air transportation. As a consideration, for the purpose of equalization in the tourism sector, the Indonesian government started to develop some other destinations beside Bali. The Indonesian government has chosen five destinations that are considered to boost Indonesia's tourism sector in the future. These five destinations are Mandalika in West Nusa Tenggara, Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara, Borobudur in Central Java, Likupang in North Sulawesi, and Lake Toba in North Sumatera. These five destinations are furtherly known as five Super Priority Destinations (5 SPD). Moreover, 5 SPD are the National Tourism Strategic Area (NTSA) that was chosen based on its own potential, uniqueness, and tourism attractions yet there is still a lot of need for development (Kemenparekraf, n.d).

Lake Toba, as one of the 5 SPD, rich in natural and cultural tourism resources making it a tremendous chance to develop sustainable tourism with the eco-friendly tourism plan. According to Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (MTCE), the development plan on the SPD Lake Toba encompasses eight regencies which are Simalungun, Toba, Samosir, North Tapanuli, Humbang Hasundutan, Karo, Dairi, and West Pakpak. In addition, for the development of the destination area, six districts have been chosen as Central Tourism Area (CTA). With a different theme of development area such as CTA Parapat will be developed to be the Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition (MICE) and recreational area, CTA Simanindo for cultural purpose, CTA Pangurupan for geotourism, CTA Balige for urban heritage purpose, CTA Muara with cultural and geology, and CTA Merek with nature-eco. Moreover, Lake Toba was planned to be an eco-friendly tourism area without damaging the cultural and local heritage (Kemenparekraf, n.d). In this regard, this study focuses on Lake Toba as a place to develop sustainable tourism policies in order to reach the goals of point 8 and 12 of SDGs.

2. Literature Review

Literature review is an important stage in research to identify novelty elements. This process involves searching from previous research journals, especially those related to the author's research. The literature review used by the authors is a study entitled "Peran Pemerintah Dalam Program Pariwisata Berkelanjutan Dalam Upaya Mewujudkan Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) di Kawasan Danau Toba" authored by Akamil Hakim, Nur Ahmadi Bi Rahmani, and Rahmat Daim Harahap. This article was published in 2024 through Jurnal Ekonomi & Ekonomi Syariah Vol 7 No 1, using sustainable tourism as the main concept.

This research employed a qualitative research method with the objective of knowing the Government's role in the sustainable tourism program in an effort to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Lake Toba Region. The result of this research indicates that the government plays an active role in the development of sustainable tourism in Lake Toba as a facilitator, regulator, and motivator. The recommendations in this research include the need for improvement and improving the quality of tourism facilities and infrastructure. There is also a requirement for supervision to ensure the comfort of visitors through the application of regulations on tourism management on Lake Toba. Socialization in the form of funding and promotions is needed to attract visitors, which automatically has an impact on the development of tourist attractions in North Sumatera.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Policy

Public policy according to Wibowo and Tangkilisan (2004), is the process or series of decisions or government activity designed to handle public issues, whether they are real or still planned (imagine). Public policy is defined as the proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or realize an objective or a purpose (Friedrich, 1967; Mutiarin et al., 2017). Public policy focuses more on shared goals, public interests, or citizens as a whole than it does on a specific or segmented interest. The proposed action that constitutes policy is then implemented through subsequent decisions and actions.

Public policy is defined by the fact that it is formulated, implemented, and evaluated by the legislative, executive, or judicial branches of government. The entirety of government activity is another definition of public policy, whether taking action, either directly or through representatives, since those decisions affect individuals' lives (Peters, 1996). An explanation put out by Peters (1996) states that public policy is the culmination of all government actions, whether taken directly or through intermediaries since it affects individuals' lives. According to the way a policy affects society, it can be divided into three stages:

1. Policy choices, which are made by politicians, public officials, or parties with the authority to make public policy;
2. Policy outputs, which are made by the government and involve actual action such as passing legislation, allocating funds, and fostering teamwork; and

3. Policy impacts, which are the actual effects of the choice of policy on the target community and society at large.

The method for comprehending the process of formulating a policy is to list a specific order of events, such as problem analysis, goal formulation, alternative design and assessment, and decision-making (Ranney, 1968). This perspective on policymaking helps bring some early order or organization to a complicated process. However, doing so runs the risk of making policy appear mechanical and under the direction of a single, controlling mind, which is untrue in real life. It falls short in describing the intricacy of the policy-making process and the various ways that policies are developed. According to Lindblom (1968), policies don't always result from issues; rather, they can arise from new opportunities. Policies are not always decided upon but happen occasionally. To put it another way, choosing not to take action is also a policy choice. This is consistent with the simple definition of public policy, which states that it is "anything governments choose to do or not do (Thomas, 1981).

2.1.2. Green Economy

The goal of the "green economy" is to enhance human conditions and promote economic growth while preserving the planet's ability to provide enough resources for future generations. Green economy defines a way of improving social equity and human well being, in the meantime reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (UNEP, 2010). Simply, green economy is low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive. Public and private investments that lower carbon emissions and pollution, improve energy and resource efficiency, stop the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and promote energy and resource efficiency are what power economic growth in a green economy (UNEP, 2011).

The main concept of a green economy that simultaneously satisfies environmental goals is not new. In fact, it was central to the "sustainable development" narrative, which was made popular by the Brundtland Report (UN, 1987). According to Jacobs (2012) The goal of the green growth discourse is to reframe sustainable development in a way that is more appealing politically, as opposed to one that is negative and unattractive.

The 2011 UNEP report on the green economy states that "the gross misallocation of capital" has been a major contributing factor to the causes of recent global crises that have affected human well-being. Significant growth and improved living conditions will result from rerouting investments to areas like renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transportation, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem and biodiversity protection and land and water conservations (Hyder, 2015).

2.1.3. Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is a demand-driven industry inspired by the need of people to experience something different from their daily lives (Engelhardt, 2008). Forstner (2004) defined tourism as an option chosen by many governments as a key tool for regional development. While tourism offers incredible opportunities, it is crucial to recognize its potential for harm, from environmental degradation to resource depletion and social disruption. This highlights the urgent need for the promotion and implementation of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism operates within a comprehensive framework that harmonizes environmental, socio-cultural, and economic factors, thereby ensuring enduring viability while minimizing adverse effects on destination locales. According to UN Tourism (n.d.), sustainable tourism is defined as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Sustainable tourism mandates a holistic approach, intricately intertwined environmental, social, and economic (Sustainable Tourism World, n.d.).

Cater (1993) outlines three pivotal objectives for sustainable tourism, such as addressing the host population's needs for enhanced livelihoods in both immediate and long-term terms, meeting the escalating demands of a growing tourist influx, and preserving the natural environment. Furthermore, Prosser (1994) identifies four influential factors propelling the pursuit of sustainability within the tourism industry, such as dissatisfaction with existing products, increasing recognition of environmental and cultural concerns, acknowledgment by destination areas of their valuable yet fragile resources, and shifting perspectives among developers and tour operators. According to UN Tourism (n.d.), there are five key pillars of sustainable tourism in development countries:

1. Tourism policy and governance
2. Trade investment, data, and competitiveness
3. Employment, decent work, and capacity building
4. Poverty reduction and social inclusion
5. Sustainability of natural and cultural environment

3. Research Method

The methodology adopted for this study employs a qualitative literature review approach, focusing on a thorough analysis of diverse and pertinent sources of information related to the research inquiry. As outlined by Zed (2008), literature review entails a series of activities involving the collection of bibliographic data, meticulous reading, systematic note-taking, and in-depth analysis of research materials. Through this methodological framework, the collated information derives from reputable scholarly

literature, esteemed journals, authoritative textbooks, and additional sources offering insightful perspectives on the contextual background, theoretical frameworks, and pertinent findings germane to the research topic.

The primary objective of implementing this methodological approach is to furnish a comprehensive exposition, critically scrutinize pertinent literature, and undertake a focused scholarly exploration of the research problem at hand. This methodology draws upon established frameworks developed by predecessors in the field, concurrently aiming to identify avenues for novel contributions to existing knowledge. By adhering to rigorous scientific standards and methodological rigor, this study endeavors to advance scholarly discourse and enhance understanding within the research domain.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Sustainable Tourism Challenges at Lake Toba

Lake Toba, designated as one of the top-priority destinations, presents a significant opportunity for development, poised to emerge as a premier tourist destination for international visitors. Leveraging its natural beauty, robust destination awareness, cultural richness, and distinction as the world's largest active volcanic caldera, Lake Toba offers immense potential for tourism development.

Harnessing the captivating natural allure of the lake, coupled with its unique geological features, provides a compelling draw for global travelers seeking immersive experience in pristine environment. Moreover, the destination's strong recognition and awareness among tourists contribute to its appeal and marketability on the international stage. Furthermore, Lake Toba's cultural wealth, characterized by vibrant traditions, indigenous heritage, and diverse local communities, adds depth and authenticity to the visitor experience. By showcasing the region's rich cultural tapestry, tourism initiatives can foster cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and sustainable tourism. Positioning Lake Toba as the world's largest active volcanic caldera underscores its geological significance and adds a layer of intrigue for adventurous travelers and geology enthusiasts alike. This unique geological heritage offers a compelling narrative and educational opportunity, enriching visitors' experiences and fostering appreciation for the Earth's natural wonders.

In developing Lake Toba as a sustainable tourism destination, it is imperative to acknowledge the challenges that need to be addressed. According to Samosir et al. (2016), there are four challenges in achieving sustainable tourism in Lake Toba:

1. Limited development of tourist attractions or areas through comprehensive and integrated planning with other development sectors.
2. The tourism workforce, which serves as the backbone of activity implementation in terms of both quality and quantity, remains insufficient to make this sector the backbone of community economies
3. Lack of comprehensive and sustainable marketing efforts.
4. Low sectoral coordination due to the characteristic interdependence of the tourism sector with other sectors, such as transportation, telecommunications, etc. Consequently, it can be inferred that the tourism sector exhibits complementary and overlapping characteristics with other sectors.

Furthermore, Manik and Astuti (2019) assert that ecological degradation will pose a sustained threat to socio-economic development of communities around Lake Toba. The predominant factor driving ecological degradation and subsequent environmental shifts within the aquatic ecosystem of Lake Toba is the conflict of interest among economic and ecological institutions regulating access to the lake's water for fisheries cultivation activities.

4.2. Opportunities Analysis to Develop Sustainable Tourism at Lake Toba

As one of the strategic areas, Lake Toba certainly has various potentials that must be managed. The existing potential is the responsibility of the government and the community. So that management requires synergy between all parties. Existing opportunities must also be managed by considering SDGs. This section will further discuss opportunities in the development of sustainable tourism in Lake Toba.

4.2.1. Strong support from the government

The government as a public sector has a very important role in supporting a tourist attraction. Lake Toba tourism as an icon of North Sumatera gets serious support from the provincial government and local governments. This is motivated by the potential for significant contributions in increasing North Sumatera's Regional Original Revenue.

A definite step that is a priority for the provincial and regional governments in the Lake Toba area has been integrated. This was realized with the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the Implementation of Transportation in the Lake Toba Region and the Signing of a Joint Agreement on the Development and Development of Vocational Education at Tourism Vocational Schools (North Sumatera Provincial Government, 2018).

The government's role as a facilitator is also evident in dealing with a handful of problems at Lake Toba tourist attraction. As

a facilitator, in its management, the local government develops supporting facilities and infrastructure that can provide comfort for visitors. Furthermore, the government also took concrete steps in empowering the community to manage tourist attractions. The management of tourism sites includes cultural value development programs and cultural management.

Apart from being a facilitator, the government also plays a role as a regulator. The government arranges and determines the direction in the implementation of development by issuing regulations. In addition, the government must also provide a basis for behavior as a guide for the community as an instrument in regulating tourism implementation activities.

In completing its role, the government also acts as a motivator to local communities, investors, and tourism entrepreneurs so that tourism development runs well. It is also intended to foster public awareness of the importance of tourism requires the government to provide socialization, training, and stimulant funds. Motivation is also given continuously to investors and tourism entrepreneurs to be interested in developing tourism businesses on Lake Toba. The impact of this will ease the burden on the government budget in order to develop the tourism potential of Lake Toba.

4.2.2. Branding, Several Tourism Destinations in Lake Toba Areas

As the largest caldera lake in the world, the existence of Lake Toba branding is unquestionable (Global Geopark Network, n.d.). In addition, the inauguration of Lake Toba as one of the SPD by the MTCE also adds to the branding of this area (Kemenparekraf, 2020). These features make Lake Toba admired by local and foreign tourists.

Lake Toba which stretches and is located in eight regions adds to the uniqueness of this lake (Sekretariat Nasional ASEAN, 2020). Being in several districts will expand the expansion of the tourism area around Lake Toba. Of course, this will indirectly expand the investment points in the Lake Toba area. The rows of tourist attraction areas around the Lake Toba area are very diverse, both land and sea tourism.

Tourist destinations in the Lake Toba area are not only limited to natural tourism but also cultural tourism. The culture that is commonly promoted in the Lake Toba region is Batak culture. Unique and symbolic Batak culture and art are also an attraction for tourists, especially foreign tourists. The arts and culture are packaged in several activities such as folk festivals. Thus making the branding of Lake Toba even stronger in Indonesia and World.

4.2.3. Creative Economy-Based Tourism

According to Rahayu (2016), Creative economy-based tourism is able to combine natural beauty with cultural wealth and local wisdom. The diversity of customs and cultures also has potential in developing the creative economy (Rakib, 2017). This is due to the diversity of products both clothing and local food that exists in each region. So the development of culture-based local wisdom is an advantage that must be highlighted in tourism development.

Creative economy-based tourism development has been running in the Lake Toba area. This is indicated by the existence of several tourist village areas. The tourist village area is also supported by the existence of tourism awareness groups (Simarmata & Panjaitan, 2019). Tourism awareness groups consist of local people who have the main contribution in tourism activities. This is one of the potentials to develop creative economic activities through the synergy of local communities.

The richness of culture and customs in Lake Toba is a potential that needs to be developed by local communities (Simarmata & Panjaitan, 2019). For example, handicrafts are local products from the local community. There are also economic potentials with the presence of religious events. In addition, the potential for plantations will empower the agricultural sector. Furthermore, the existence of seasonal traditional parties organized by the tourism office will increase income for the community.

4.3. Opportunities Analysis to Develop Sustainable Tourism at Lake Toba

To support sustainability and environmental protection in the tourism sector, there is a highly needed policy that arranges eco-friendly tourism. Eco-friendly tourism may provide job occupancies and at the same time protect the sustainability of environment and local communities preservation (Zabihi et al, 2020). Furthermore, this study elaborates the policies needed to develop sustainable tourism with eco-friendly tourism models in Lake Toba which are below.

4.3.1. Sustainable Transportation

Environmental damages are well known affected by greenhouse gas (GHG) emission. One of the largest contributors of GHG emission is from fossil-fuel based transportation. This is why the transition from fossil-fuel based transportation to eco-friendly transportation is highly needed. In the case of Lake Toba, sustainable transportation is a crucial purpose to achieve sustainable tourism. Moreover, sustainable transportation has enormous potential to develop, considering that two of the main goals of SPD development are the amenity and accessibility to tourism areas.

However, sustainable transportation is not only based on conventional forms with electric based transportation, but exists in various forms. These forms such as electric vehicles, bicycles, carpool, and even walking are included in sustainable transportation models. In fact, MTCE also in one of their plans is to implement sustainable transportation, for example, use of electric buses in the CTAs. This policy is also supported by the functions of the transportation sector as a promoting factor and serving factor of tourism (Yudana, 2016).

4.3.2. Community-Based Tourism

Preservation of cultural heritage as well as sustainability of economic growth are the main goals of community-based tourism (Skare et al, 2023). Tourism businesses owned by the local communities must be preserved in order to maintain the local economic growth. Community-based tourism offers financial benefits toward local businesses such as fostering employment and at the same time preserving the social and cultural heritage (Li et al, 2023). This concept may be implemented by creating policies to empower local communities.

Empowering local communities over the tourism activities may be beneficial in both the economic and cultural sector. Local communities can carry out cultural entrepreneurship that can create creative economic activities and at the same time preserve traditional and cultural heritage. In this case, Batak Tribe may promote their own local businesses with traditional attractions, for example, Ulos fabricating skill class. Empowering local communities can be started by involving local communities in decision making of tourism policies. By implementing community-based tourism, the sustainability of tourism and cultural heritage can be preserved.

4.3.3. Public-Private Partnerships Toward Green Investment

Green investment is defined as the funding activities to project or companies with the objectives to sustainability practices and preservation of environmental and social resources. Green investment evidently proven to have a positive linkage with sustainable development (Chien, 2023). Investment is highly needed in order to maintain green projects such as renewable energy consumption and production, clean land management, forestation, waste management, recycling, etc (Indriastuti & Chariri, 2021). Green investment also in accordance with point 8 and 12 of SDGs.

Moreover, the public-private partnerships take a big part of aiding the funds on the green investment. Public or governmental funding is not enough if we want to make a far improvement on tourism. In this regard, private intervention toward green investment may support the objective of sustainable tourism. When green investment is projected, economic growth improves, along with environmental sustainability and society empowering.

Lake Toba, as one of the 5 SPD, has so many green investment potential over the CTAs. With the diversity of the development area's theme, such as businesses, natural beauty, cultural heritage, and recreational areas, become a big potential for investment, especially green initiatives. As well as Minister of Public Works and Housing Basuki Hadimuljono said, the first move to develop the tourism sector is to build the infrastructure and promote it. By taking advantage of these infrastructural projects, the private sector may support sustainable tourism by investing with green initiatives. Moreover, CTA development will take place in the range of 25 years (2020-2045), making it a good medium and/or even long-term green investment.

5. Conclusion

Designated as a top-priority destination, Lake Toba has several challenges and opportunities in its development to achieve sustainable tourism. There are four challenges in achieving sustainable tourism in Lake Toba such as limited development of tourist attractions, tourism workforce, lack of comprehensive and sustainable marketing efforts, and low sectoral coordination. Then, The opportunities that exist and can be developed in Lake Toba are strong support from the government, branding, several tourism destinations, and creative economy-based tourism. Some of these challenges and opportunities must be managed with several policy alternatives. There are three alternatives that can be recommendations for sustainable tourism development. Firstly, developing sustainable transportation. Secondly, empowering local communities with community-based tourism. Thirdly, creating public-private partnerships toward green investment.

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