

The Role of Government and the Community in the Development of Morea Pond Tourism in Larike Village, West Leihitu District, Central Maluku Regency

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ABSTRACT

Tourism holds significant potential as an economic revenue source and a driver of development in regions. One of the tourist destinations with the potential for continuous development in the eastern part of Indonesia is the Morea Pond tourism destination in Larike Village, West Leihitu District, Central Maluku Regency. This research aims to analyze the roles of the government and the community in the efforts to develop the tourism destination in the Maluku Province. The research methodology employs a qualitative approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the government plays a role as a facilitator, motivator, and educator in promoting the development of Morea Pond tourism. This involves providing information and creating a conducive tourism climate, offering facilities to support the development of tourism potential, and educating the community through tourism-related training. The government also maintains environmental conservation, ensures order and security, and enhances the beauty of the tourist location. Additionally, the community contributes to the development of the Morea Pond tourism site by cultivating entrepreneurial skills such as culinary businesses, participating in tourism training to provide services for tourists, and serving as guides in performances at the Morea Pond tourism location.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation, possesses abundant tourism potential spread across various regions that can be utilized to support the country's economy. The tourism sector, if well-regulated and of high quality, can contribute significantly to the nation. Among its contributions are the augmentation

of foreign exchange reserves, stimulation of economic growth, and the creation of new employment opportunities [1].

Tourism is a temporary journey conducted from one place to another, not for business or livelihood purposes at the destination, but solely for the enjoyment of the journey for recreation or to fulfill diverse desires. Essentially, tourism is a service-

oriented activity resulting from the tourism industry, capable of creating travel experiences for tourists.

Tourism plays a crucial role in increasing income in each region. Law Number 10 of 2009 on Tourism explains that tourism is necessary to promote equal opportunities for business, benefit acquisition, and the ability to face challenges from changes in local, national, and global life. As a potential aspect for increasing regional income, tourism must be developed sustainably. Therefore, there is a need for the government and the community to play a role in its management. The government must shift its focus towards economic policies through tourism promotion as a source of regional economic revitalization [2].

The development of the tourism sector is something that must be considered logically and realistically [3]. Similarly, the sustainable management of tourism must be comprehensive to obtain optimal benefits for the community, both economically, socially, and culturally. The government's role in developing and managing sustainable tourism generally involves providing infrastructure, both physical and non-physical, expanding various facilities, coordinating activities between government agencies and the private sector, and regulating and promoting tourism to other regions and abroad. The government has authority in regulating, providing, and allocating various infrastructures related to the needs of tourism. The concept of green industry is highly suitable for nature-based tourism, especially ecotourism, in creating quality tourism. This allows small groups of tourists to maintain the quality of natural attractions such as forests, rivers, lakes, and beaches, and can increase the income and welfare of the local community [4].

West Leihitu Subdistrict, Larike Village, has diverse uniqueness, ranging from natural wealth to well-preserved traditions. One of them is the presence of giant eels (morea) in Larike Village, West Leihitu Subdistrict, Central Maluku Regency. Central Maluku ranks first in population density in the Maluku Province with a population of

423,094 (22.88%), followed by Ambon City with a total of 347,280 people (18.78%) [5]. The clear freshwater of the Wailela River, connected to the sea, is home to these 1 to 1.5-meter-long morea, resembling wild animals. The people of Larike Village refer to them as morea. Morea has been present since 1999, before the ethnic conflict in Maluku that led to the social disintegration of Maluku society [6]. During this time, the people of Larike Village have never hunted them for food; instead, they consider morea as guardians of the Wailela River springs.

A tradition has developed, where it is believed that if a community member steals or even kills a morea, they will face sanctions. Handling morea must be done carefully, without being rough or harming the animal. If tourists injure a morea, they will be reprimanded by the tour guides and the local community present at the Morea Pond tourism site.

All aspects related to policies of the development directions for rural communities need important roles of vital people in the society [7]. The roles of the government and the community are crucial in developing the sustainability of the Morea Pond tourism area in Larike Village, with the hope of contributing to the livelihoods of the community and the local economy. Community involvement in various programs holds the key to the development of the Morea Pond tourism area. The policy direction undertaken to enhance the roles of the government and the community includes the development and preservation of Morea Pond tourism, the environment in the Wailela River watershed, the trees around the Wailela River, and conservation areas based on local community development. In addition to increasing community participation, coordination at the provincial local government level also needs improvement.

Tourism has been recognized as one of the vital economic sectors. The Morea Pond tourism is expected to be a source of economic income and an enhancement of the village's income. Therefore, the development and advancement of tourism need to be elevated through tourism development policies.

Various efforts have been made by the government to boost tourism development in Larike Village, aiming for increased recognition by both local residents and tourists from outside the region.

In connection with enhancing the economic function of Larike Village, business entities and the community need to be involved in preserving and developing the ecosystem in the Morea Pond tourism area. Therefore, collaboration from various parties, including government agencies and the community, is required in the development of Morea Pond tourism. The community needs to be engaged in tourism management activities. As an integrated tourism area, Morea Pond is expected to serve as an ecosystem buffer in the West Leihitu Subdistrict, Central Maluku Regency. With several areas having significant potential for this tourism region, the spatial planning of the region needs to be reassessed with the assistance of the Central Maluku Regency Government, as the authority responsible for coordinating between regions.

Based on these explanations, the author is interested in conducting this research to uncover the roles of the government and the community in the development of Morea Pond tourism in Larike Village, West Leihitu Subdistrict, Central Maluku Regency.

2. METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach. The rationale for using a qualitative approach aligns with Merriam's perspective as cited in [8], including the following reasons: (1) Qualitative researchers are more concerned with the process rather than the results or products; (2) Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning, specifically how people attempt to understand their lives, experiences, and environmental structures; (3) Qualitative researchers serve as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis. Data are obtained through human instruments rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines; (4) Qualitative research is closely associated with fieldwork.

It means that researchers are physically involved directly with people, settings, places, or institutions to observe or record behavior in its natural context; (5) Qualitative research is descriptive, meaning researchers focus on processes, meanings, and understanding obtained through words or images.

To address the issues raised above, a descriptive method is employed to obtain data. The rationale for using the descriptive method is that it provides a clearer picture of social situations. Additionally, the descriptive method is more specific, focusing on particular aspects and often revealing relationships between various variables. As expressed by [9], the descriptive method is a technique used to examine the status of a human group, an object, a condition, a thought system, or a class of events at present. The goal of this descriptive research is to systematically create a description, portrayal, or depiction along with the relationships between the investigated phenomena.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the Government in the Development of Morea Pond Tourism

The government has undertaken various efforts in tourism development, focusing on the participation and well-being of the local community. Some efforts that have been made include, first, the formation of participation-based tourism policies. The government has designed tourism policies that integrate the participation of the local community. This involves organizing public consultations, cross-sector dialogues, and other participatory mechanisms to ensure that the needs and aspirations of the local community are accommodated in the tourism development plan. Second, the empowerment of the local community; government efforts have focused on empowering the local community, including skills training, the development of micro and small businesses, and the promotion of local economies. This empowerment can help the local community to be more involved in the tourism value

chain and experience the economic benefits of the industry.

Third is the preservation of culture and the environment. The government has taken action to involve the community in preserving cultural heritage and the local environment. Cultural education and awareness programs have been introduced to ensure that the local community understands the importance of preserving their cultural identity while maintaining environmental sustainability. Fourth, infrastructure development; the government has allocated budgets for tourism infrastructure development, such as roads, transportation, and public facilities. This not only improves the accessibility of destinations but also creates local job opportunities in the construction and maintenance sectors.

Fifth, collaboration with private and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The government has fostered cooperation with the private sector and NGOs to support sustainable tourism development. This collaboration involves private sector investments in tourism projects and support from NGOs to ensure social and environmental responsibility. Additionally, although not routine, the government provides social and welfare programs for the local community directly impacted by tourism activities. This includes economic assistance, education, health, and infrastructure programs to enhance the quality of life for the local community. These government efforts aim to achieve a balance between tourism economic growth and the well-being of the local community, ensuring that the benefits of the tourism industry are widely distributed in the local communities.

The Role of the Community in the Development of Morea Pond Tourism

The local community in Larike Village, West Leihitu District, Central Maluku Regency plays a crucial role in the development of tourism destinations in its area. Various roles undertaken by the local community in several key sectors at the Morea Pond tourism destination are, firstly, in the culinary business. The local community plays

a significant role in the culinary sector by providing local food and beverages that reflect the cultural richness of the region, such as dried bread, bagea, noga, cakes, and banana chips. Culinary businesses, such as eateries or street vendors, can be attractive to tourists seeking an authentic culinary experience. Furthermore, collaboration with local farmers for sourcing raw materials can support the local economy.

Secondly, acting as tour guides. Local community members who serve as tour guides provide local insights, historical stories, and cultural information to tourists. They introduce interesting places, local customs, and help tourists experience the authenticity of the destination. Local tour guides also play a role in environmental and cultural preservation by providing information about sustainable practices at Morea Pond. Third, tourism management; some individuals or groups from the local community are involved in the management and administration of the tourism destination. They manage accommodation facilities, tourist attractions, or tourist information centers. This role includes organizing activities, maintaining infrastructure, and providing services to tourists.

Lastly, security personnel. The local community also plays a role in providing security services at the tourism destination. This includes security officers responsible for maintaining order and security, safeguarding public facilities, and providing a sense of security to tourists. Local community involvement in these aspects not only provides direct economic benefits but also supports sustainable development and the preservation of cultural identity. Through their active participation, the local community has maintained a balance between tourism growth and the preservation of local values, creating a sustainable and meaningful tourism destination.

Development of Morea Pond Tourism

Tourism is a temporary journey organized from one place to another, not for business or livelihood purposes in the visited place, but solely to enjoy the journey for

recreation or to fulfill various desires [10]. The developed Morea Pond tourism has become a unique attraction for the residents of Larike Village and tourists to visit a destination.

The potential of tourism as tourism capital or tourism resources depends heavily on the ability and willingness of the community. Tourism resources include elements of the natural environment or those altered by humans into tourist attractions that can fulfill the desires of tourists. Potential resources include elements of the environment that will become actual resources and human-made facilities. These facilities can be infrastructure and amenities that provide convenience and comfort for tourists to visit, engage in activities, and return to their place of origin, thus gaining satisfaction from the tourism activities they have undertaken. With sustainability as a key consideration, wise planning and the implementation of sustainable practices will help protect the beauty of nature and ensure that this destination can be enjoyed by future generations.

4. CONCLUSION

The government has played a role as a facilitator, motivator, and educator in driving the development of Morea Pond tourism. This has been achieved through the provision of information, creating a

conducive tourism climate, supplying facilities that support the development of tourism potential, and educating the community through tourism training. The government has also been involved in preserving environmental conservation, maintaining order and security, as well as enhancing the beauty of the Morea Pond tourism location. Additionally, the community has played a crucial role in the development of Morea Pond tourism by fostering entrepreneurial spirit, engaging in culinary businesses, providing tourism training to serve tourists, acting as guides in performances at the Morea Pond tourism location, and serving as security personnel to ensure safety and order, safeguard public facilities, and provide a sense of security to tourists.

Furthermore, the existence of Morea Pond tourism in Larike Village has made a significant contribution to the government, the local community, and the youth of Larike Village. The notably positive impact includes changes in the habits and behavior of the community and youth, who were previously involved in activities such as theft due to a lack of clear income sources. Since the establishment of Morea Pond tourism in Larike Village, positive changes have occurred, turning it into an opportunity for earning a livelihood for the local community.

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