

The Role of Human Resources in Sustainable Tourism in the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village

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Abstract

Although the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village is known for its natural beauty and biodiversity, there is still a need for active human resource involvement in the development of sustainable tourism to create a balance between the economy, environment, and society in Bukit Lawang. This research aims to determine the role of human resources (HR) in the development of sustainable tourism in the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village, to identify the challenges faced in managing sustainable tourism. This research uses qualitative research methods, observation, interviews, and literature study as data collection techniques. The result of this research is that human resources (HR) in the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village play a very important role in developing sustainable tourism. The human resources involved, such as Tourism awareness group, local entrepreneurs, and local guides, have been active in promoting the natural and cultural tourism potential in the village. Some of the challenges faced in sustainable tourism management in the Tourism awareness group Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village include the lack of training and human resource capacity in tourism management, waste management, and broader tourism promotion. In addition, limited access and inadequate infrastructure also pose obstacles in attracting more tourists. Some communities have not fully realized the importance of environmentally friendly tourism management. Organizing continuous training for human resources in the fields of tourism management, waste management, and digital-based promotion. The recommendation that researchers can provide is that the government needs to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving the environment through more intensive educational programs, developing supporting infrastructure such as better road access and environmentally friendly public facilities, and encouraging collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector to strengthen the management and supervision of tourism development in the village.

Keywords: Human Resources, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Village

A. INTRODUCTION

The Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village is one of the tourist destinations located in the ecotourism area of Gunung Leuser National Park, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The literal meaning of the word Bukit Lawang is "door to the hill". Bukit Lawang is a small village located 90 kilometers northwest of Medan, the capital of North Sumatra, Indonesia. Bukit Lawang is most famous for being one of the last places in the world where people can see orangutans in the wild. Bukit Lawang is located on the eastern side of Gunung Leuser National Park.

In 1973, a Swiss organization established an orangutan rehabilitation center in Bukit Lawang. The goal of this center is to rehabilitate orangutans released from captivity. The keepers at the center teach the orangutans all the skills necessary to survive in the wild. After an intensive quarantine period, readjustment to their natural habitat, and reintegration into the (semi-)wild population, the orangutans are released back into the forest. All released orangutans are still monitored by rangers, and they still provide them with supplementary food on feeding platforms until they become fully independent. In the years following the arrival of the rehabilitation center, more tourists came to Bukit Lawang, and it became one of the most popular destinations in Sumatra.

The word “Sustainability” comes from the Latin word “sus-tenere”, which means ‘to sustain’. According to (Ehnert, 2009, p. 8), sustainable development can be treated as the ability to develop on the different levels of societal, organizational, and individual. It is essential to develop the resources which could be important in the future, and one of these resources can be defined with certainty as human resources. According to (Frieling, 2005) “development of one contributes to the development of all”.

(Brewster, 2000), (Barney, 2002), (Martin, 2003), (Dyer, 2004), (Schuler, 2004), and (Helfat, 2007) discussed the nature of human resources: demonstrating that it is not like other resources as it is able to react, has needs, and cannot be owned by an organization – and so therefore can’t be treated in the same way as other resources. Sustainability and sustainable development are, of course, but all definitions broadly coalesce around a number of key components or principles that include equity (inter/intra generational, interspecies, geographical, and procedural); process dynamics and the recognition of constant change; integration of the interests of the various stakeholders of sustainability; and normativity which recognizes the social constructs that underpin sustainability. In this paper, reference is made to an understanding of sustainability and sustainable practices that acknowledge all of these principles.

(Russo, 2002) research found that tourism in Venice is not matched by tourism policies that consider environmental carrying capacity, resulting in supporting subsystems such as transportation and waste management becoming inadequate in line with the increase in the number of tourists. This research aims to determine the role of human resources (HR) in the development of sustainable tourism in the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village, to identify the challenges faced in managing sustainable tourism. Although the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village is already known for its natural beauty and biodiversity, there is still a need for active human resource involvement in the development of sustainable tourism to create a balance between the economy, environment, and society in Bukit Lawang. This information was obtained by the researcher from the statements of the Bukit Lawang community and the results of an interview with the head of Pokdarwis on October 5, 2024. Based on the above issues, the purpose of this research is to determine the role of human resources (HR) in the development of sustainable tourism in the Bukit Lawang Plantation Tourism Village, to identify the challenges faced in managing sustainable tourism.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher used qualitative methods. The qualitative data collection techniques used are observation and interviews. In collecting data related to sustainable tourism, the researcher openly stated to the data source, namely the chairman of the Pokdarwis, that the researcher was conducting research and also observing tourists to obtain data related to the role of human resources in sustainable tourism in the Bukit Lawang Plantation Tourism Village. The researcher combined observational techniques with direct communication techniques in the form of in-depth interviews. The interviews conducted by the researcher are structured interviews. In conducting the interview with the head of the pokdarwis, the researcher presented the interview guide instrument (written questions) and the tools used. The tools for the interview are a notebook to record all conversations with the data source, a phone to record all conversations, and a camera to take photos when the researcher is conversing with the data source. Next, it can be concluded that the data collection techniques used in this study are interviews and observations. The instruments

used are interview guides, observation guides (checklists), recording devices (tape recorders), cameras, notebooks, and writing tools. The population in this study is the heads of pokdarwis. The qualitative sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, where data sources are selected with specific considerations and objectives, namely individuals who understand sustainable tourism in Bukit Lawang. Therefore, the informant is the head of the Bukit Lawang community tourism group. The data analysis technique used is qualitative data analysis. According to (Sugiyono, 2018), qualitative research methods are research methods based on philosophy used to study scientific conditions (experiments) where the researcher acts as an instrument, data collection techniques, and qualitative analysis that emphasizes meaning. The process of qualitative data analysis according to the Miles and Huberman model (in (Sugiyono, 2014)) begins with data reduction, data presentation, and drawing/conclusion verification.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before discussing the formulation of the problem, here are the products, locations, and ticket prices for the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang tourism village managed by the Langkat Regency Tourism and Culture Office. The products offered by the Bukit Lawang Ecotourism Village include tracking in the forest to see wildlife, including orangutans, and enjoying the natural beauty. Additionally, tourists can go rafting and tubing along the Bahorok River. Here are the attractions in the Bukit Lawang Plantation Tourism Village:



Figure 1. Attractions in the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2024

Accessibility to the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang tourism village is partly via paved roads and partly via unpaved roads, as illustrated in the following image:



Figure 2. Accessibility to the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2024

Based on image 2, tourists can use public or private transportation to reach the location. The condition to reach the location from the main road is not very good, as shown in picture 3. Tourists have to park their vehicles in the area near the field and then walk in because vehicles cannot pass through. The entrance ticket to Bukit Lawang Plantation Tourism Village is five thousand rupiah for motorcycles and ten thousand rupiah for cars. Anyone can visit this Perkebunan Bukit Lawang Tourism Village.

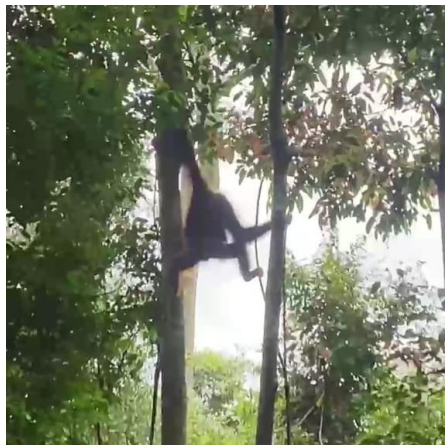


Figure 3. Attraction of Orangutans in the Bukit Lawang Plantation Tourism Village
Source: Researcher Documentation, 2024

According to the Chairman of the Tourism Awareness Group (POKDARWIS) who was interviewed, sustainable tourism is understood as a concept that emphasizes visitor comfort to encourage them to return, as well as educating local vendors about fair prices at tourist attractions. This shows that sustainable tourism not only involves environmental and economic aspects but also the social welfare of the local community. Education about fair pricing can reduce the potential for tourist exploitation while enhancing their positive experiences. The head of POKDARWIS emphasized that sustainable tourism can provide significant economic benefits to the community, as long as tourism can generate income. (income). The presence of the rapidly growing tourism sector provides job opportunities, opens up local business prospects, and increases the purchasing power of the surrounding community. This aligns with the idea that well-managed tourism is not only beneficial for tourists but also brings positive impacts to the local economy.

Some steps taken to protect the environment while allowing tourists to visit include efforts to maintain cleanliness, such as not littering, and protecting water ecosystems, such as keeping rivers clean from waste. In addition, there is a collaborative initiative with neighboring villages to create a "forbidden pool" that serves as a conservation area for endemic fish in the Bahorok River.

This is a concrete example of the application of conservation principles in sustainable tourism practices, which prioritize nature protection while providing facilities for tourists. In terms of the skills needed to work in the sustainable tourism sector, the Chairman of POKDARWIS revealed that the available training is still very limited. This indicates a need for more intensive human resource capacity development, especially in aspects of tourism destination management, environmental management, and communication skills training to interact with tourists.

The head of POKDARWIS stated that waste management has become an important issue, especially with the increasing number of tourists visiting. In their community, a clean-up action is carried out every Friday as an effort to maintain the cleanliness of the tourist site. This activity demonstrates the importance of active community participation in maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability, although there are still challenges related to public awareness in better waste management.

The biggest challenge faced in managing sustainable tourism is the lack of awareness among some members of the community, especially in terms of preserving the environment and local culture. The proposed solution is to continuously encourage the community to be more caring through a more educational and gradual approach, in order to build collective awareness in maintaining the sustainability aspects of tourism. Tourists can support sustainable tourism by participating in the promotion of tourist destinations, providing positive reviews, and helping to introduce tourist attractions to others. The head of POKDARWIS hopes that tourists can be more active in spreading information that can attract more visitors, which in turn will raise awareness about the importance of sustainable tourism. According to the Chairman of POKDARWIS, although the community has sufficient resources to manage sustainable tourism, assistance from external parties, such as the government or related organizations, is still needed. This assistance is needed in the form of training, funding, and infrastructure to support the smooth and sustainable management of tourism.

Tourism has a significant positive impact on the preservation of local culture and traditions. The head of POKDARWIS stated that tourism can serve as a means to introduce local culture to tourists while also preserving existing traditions from extinction. This also opens up opportunities for the community to express and celebrate their cultural heritage. The head of POKDARWIS stated that he is very often involved in activities that support sustainable tourism, such as clean-up actions, waste management, and river conservation. This reflects the active commitment of the community in maintaining the sustainability of tourism in their village.

Some of the training conducted by the village for the local community includes trekking training. Because some locals work as local guides. This training aims to enhance the community's skills in welcoming incoming tourists by teaching them safe and environmentally friendly trekking techniques. However, training such as tourism awareness in the community is still lacking. The head of POKDARWIS is involved in tourism development by implementing new programs and organizing various events that attract visitors. This shows an active role in advancing tourism that not only relies on natural potential but also on creativity in developing new attractions.

The positive impact of tourism is the improvement of communication skills with tourists, as well as learning from the positive habits brought by foreign tourists. That interaction can open new horizons for the local community. The negative impact felt by the community is the change in lifestyle, where some members of the community are more inclined to follow Western lifestyles rather than preserving local customs and culture. This can be a challenge in maintaining the local

cultural identity.

The head of POKDARWIS hopes that the government can play a more active role in modernizing the Perkebunan Bukit Lawang tourist village, so that not only the local community is involved in tourism management, but it can also compete with other more advanced tourist destinations. The head of POKDARWIS sees significant developments in the tourism sector in Perkebunan Bukit Lawang, with the number of tourists increasing every year. This shows that Perkebunan Bukit Lawang has great potential to continue developing as an environmentally friendly and sustainable tourist destination.

Based on the interview results with the Chairman of the Tourism Awareness Group (POKDARWIS) in Bukit Lawang, it can be concluded that although tourism in the area is developing rapidly, there are still several challenges in its management, particularly related to environmental sustainability, community awareness, and training for the local population. Here are some solutions that can be implemented to support sustainable tourism in Bukit Lawang:

1. Improvement of Training and Skills for the Local Community

Issue: The available training is still limited, and the local community's skills in managing sustainable tourism are not yet optimal.

Solution:

Implementation of Structured Training Programs: The government, together with tourism organizations, can organize comprehensive training programs that cover tourism management, environmental preservation, as well as communication and tourism service skills.

2. Raising Environmental Awareness Among Tourists and the Community

Issue: Many tourists and local residents are not yet fully aware of the importance of preserving the environment.

Solution:

- Education and Outreach Campaign: Conducting outreach campaigns about the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness, such as not littering and not damaging nature. This campaign can be conducted through social media, information boards at tourist sites, and direct outreach by tour guides.
- Collaboration with Surrounding Villages for Conservation: Continuing and expanding conservation programs, such as no-fishing zones to protect river ecosystems, and involving tourists in nature preservation activities, such as beach clean-ups or tree planting.

3. More Efficient Waste and Garbage Management

Problem: Waste management has become a challenge, especially with the increasing number of tourists visiting.

Solution:

- Integrated Waste Management System: Provide separate trash bins throughout tourist areas for organic, plastic, and non-organic waste, and ensure facilities for recycling plastic waste.

4. Development of Eco-Friendly Infrastructure

Issue: The existing infrastructure is still limited and does not adequately support tourism sustainability.

Solution:

- Sustainable Infrastructure Development: Developing environmentally friendly infrastructure,

such as the use of renewable energy (e.g., solar panels), efficient water management systems, and the construction of environmentally friendly sanitation facilities like compost toilets. This will reduce the negative impact on the environment and enhance the quality of the tourist experience.

- Improved Accessibility: Improving roads to tourist destinations in a way that does not harm the ecosystem, and providing eco-friendly transportation alternatives such as bicycles or electric vehicles, which can reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

5. Community Empowerment and Strengthening Local Leadership

Issue: Lack of awareness and community involvement in sustainable tourism management, as well as limited support from external parties.

Solution:

- Empowering Local Communities: Developing strong local leadership in managing sustainable tourism. Local leaders and members of tourism awareness groups need to be involved in decision-making and long-term planning to ensure the sustainability of tourism in the area.
- Facilitate Participation in Tourism Management: Open more opportunities for the community to engage in the process of managing tourist destinations, including promotional activities, event planning, and cleanliness management.

6. Increased Support and Collaboration with the Government

Issue: Local government still has a limited role in supporting sustainable tourism management in Bukit Lawang.

Solution:

- Strengthening the Role of the Government in Tourism Management: The government needs to be more active in providing budgets, infrastructure, and policies that support sustainable tourism. The government can provide incentives or assistance to local businesses committed to sustainability principles, such as ecotourism ventures or environmentally friendly products.
- Building Partnerships with Tourism Organizations: The government and local communities can collaborate with national or international tourism organizations to gain guidance in managing eco-friendly destinations and to attract more sustainability-conscious tourists.

According to (Hadiwijoyo, 2012), sustainable tourism is tourism whose development is adjusted to the needs of tourists while maintaining environmental sustainability, capable of providing job opportunities for the younger generation, and can be developed based on the existing social order. Tourism development is a structured effort to improve tourism objects and areas as well as to build new objects and areas intended for tourists (Sutiarso, 2017). According to (Syaifuddin, 2019), the impact of tourism on the economic characteristics of society has both negative and positive effects that arise within the socio-economic environment of community life, leading to changes in employment and income, job opportunities, and the division of labor due to tourism development.

Based on the Sustainable Tourism and Green Jobs Strategic Plan for Indonesia (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia) ((UNWTO), 2013), tourism is encouraged to become sustainable tourism to create environmentally friendly tourism and is an important step in contributing to inclusive development so that tourism can be utilized in the long term. According to UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) in the document Sustainable Tourism Strategic Plan, indicators of sustainable tourism from an environmental aspect include:

- a. Protection of valuable natural resources
- b. Management of rare natural resources
- c. Limiting the impact of tourism activities
- d. Management of the visual impact of tourism facilities and infrastructure: environmental hue, construction, design, and landscape
- e. Promotion of Sustainable Tourism
- f. Health and safety, and
- g. Tourist control.

HR plays a key role in achieving the success of sustainable tourism. (Evans, 2003). Good rural tourism development is development that is carried out together, including "building together with the community," so that rural tourism development can provide economic, social, and cultural benefits to the local community. The proposed solutions above aim to address the main challenges in sustainable tourism management in Bukit Lawang, including the limited training for the community, waste management issues, and the need for infrastructure that supports sustainability. With the implementation of these solutions, it is hoped that tourism in Bukit Lawang can continue to develop, providing greater economic benefits to the local community, and preserving the local environment and culture. This research emphasizes that the development of sustainable tourism in Bukit Lawang heavily relies on the active role of human resources as well as support from the government and local communities.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the research and discussion results, it can be concluded that the role of human resources in sustainable tourism can be enhanced by increasing HR capacity through training programs focused on tourism management skills and customer service, which is very important. This helps improve the quality of service received by tourists. The involvement of local communities in tourism planning and development also ensures that they receive economic benefits from tourism activities. This also encourages the preservation of culture and the environment. Human resources skilled in social media usage can effectively promote Bukit Lawang to a wider audience. Research shows that social media plays a crucial role in planning travel and providing information to tourists. The role of human resources in sustainable tourism in the Bukit Lawang Plantation Tourism Village is very significant. Through education, training, active participation, and the use of social media, human resources can enhance the quality of tourist experiences while maintaining the sustainability of the environment and local culture. Therefore, investment in human resource development must be a priority for all relevant stakeholders such as local governments, local communities, local entrepreneurs, and most importantly, society.

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