

The Socio-Economic Benefits of Community-based Mangrove Ecotourism in Lontar Village, Serang Regency

Encep Saefullah*¹, Syamsul Hidayat², and Fatari³

Management Study Programme of Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang

Malik Fatoni⁴

Government Science Study Programme of Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang

Nani Rohaeni⁵

Accounting Study Programme of Universitas Bina Bangsa, Serang

*Corresponding Author: encep.saefullah@binabangsa.ac.id

ABSTRACT Ecotourism has been increasingly recognized as providing benefits not only in preserving the natural environment but can also improve the economy of local communities. To validate this assumption, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of Mangrove ecotourism in Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, Serang Regency and its benefits to the community. The research method uses a qualitative descriptive method. The sample for this study was 70 respondents by asking questions using a questionnaire sheet in the form of Criteria and Indicators for Indonesian Ecotourism (KIEI) Year 2009. Data on potential came from field observations taken in the mangrove ecotourism area of Lontar Village. To verify ecotourism studies, the technique used is a formative evaluation of ongoing ecotourism activities with the application of KIEI. The results of this study indicate that based on the 5 criteria for managing ecotourism according to the KIEI guidelines, the results of the implementation of conservation activities were 46.32% sufficient, participation 48.41% good, education and recreation 47.73% good, economy 45.19% sufficient, and control of 43.91% less category. Based on the research results, tourists and the community strongly agree that the socio-economic benefits of community-based ecotourism management are 44.40%.

KEYWORDS Ecotourism; Lontar Village; Mangroves.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector has been seen as an alternative to increase the economic level of society and being able to alleviate poverty (Yuty, 2008), tourism can also be relied upon to improve people's welfare and national development (Primadany, 2013). The current tourism concept is conventional tourism, because it only seeks economic benefits (Widowati & Nadra, 2013) and often damages natural ecosystems. To prevent this, another alternative is needed in creating community-based sustainable tourism (Pornprasit & Rurkkhum, 2019; Sri Wahyuni et al., 2023) by

continuing to prioritize nature conservation (Widowati & Nadra, 2013).

Then, nowadays the concept of ecotourism is increasingly popping up in various regions which are alternative tourism and offer forms of tourism that are friendly to natural and cultural sustainability. Ecotourism is a responsible tourism activity that is primarily based on nature tourism activities, by also including some rural tourism activities and cultural tourism (Wood, 2002). Through ecotourism, tourists and all components related to organizing tourism are invited to be more sensitive to environmental and social issues

so that natural resources are expected to remain sustainable and tourists have a high appreciation of the environment. In addition, the community around the tourism object will benefit from the implementation of tourism because ecotourism tourists who come generally have the goal of seeking opportunities to unite with nature and local culture by staying away from the hustle and bustle of the urban atmosphere.

At the local level, the role of regional tourism is very important with the development and contribution made by the tourism sector through foreign exchange earnings, regional income, regional development, as well as in absorbing investment, labor, and business development which are spread in various regions including in the area of Serang Regency, Banten Province. Basically ecotourism is a conservation activity for nature and the environment that is packaged in a tourism destination, which also has an impact on the local economy. One type of ecotourism in Serang Regency is mangrove ecotourism which is located in Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, which is the northern coastal area of the western part of Java Island and is included in marine ecotourism (Musaddun et al., 2013; Yulius et al., 2018). Lontar Village started to develop mangrove ecotourism which was originally a pond area about 700 meters later the area was exposed to abrasion.

Along with its development, there has been an increase in people's awareness in Lontar Village regarding the utilization of natural resources in the form of mangrove forests as tourism which later, if traced further, turns out that this tourism is a community-based ecotourism concept,

where tourism and the natural environment become integrated so as to increase the economic level of the community and still the holder of control, namely the community itself (Tanaya & Rudiarto, 2014).

However, the research results of Widowati & Nadra, (2013) stated that the development of ecotourism in the Ijen Banyuwangi crater nature tourism park area to improve people's welfare has not been achieved. The results of this study indicate that there are still inconsistencies with statements from Tanaya & Rudiarto, (2014). Then the results of the study of Çakar & Seyitoğlu, (2023) reveal that tourist visitors will be impressed because there is a motivation to visit different tours and perceptions of the authenticity of the form of tourism, including in this case mangrove ecotourism.

Another problem is as revealed by Kia, (2021) that ecotourism management often does not involve the participation of the community as a very important stakeholder, instead local people are seen as mere objects or spectators without being actively involved in the economic process. This community participation is the focus of this research so that the mangrove ecotourism of Lontar Village needs to be evaluated like research conducted by (Abrehe et al., 2021; Husamah & Hudha, 2018; Noviantoro, 2020; Nyaupane & Thapa, 2004; Wardle et al., 2021; Widowati & Nadra, 2013). Because community participation (Ghaderi et al., 2023) needs to be involved in managing mangrove ecotourism such as cooperation, involvement, and equality (Husamah & Hudha, 2018; Kia, 2021).

Conceptually, ecotourism emphasizes integrated basic principles that must be considered to ensure its success. In

this regard, this study aims to evaluate the potential of mangrove ecotourism activities taking place in Lontar Village using the Indonesian Ecotourism Criteria and Indicators (WWF-Indonesia, 2009) consisting of five principles that need to be considered by managers and developers, namely (1) Ecotourism sustainability from economic, social and environmental aspects (Conservation principle, 3 criteria); (2) Development of local community institutions and partnerships (Principle of community participation, 4 criteria); (3) Community-based economy (4 criteria); (4) Education principle (4 criteria); and (5) Development and implementation of a site plan and ecotourism management framework (Principles of tourism, 7 criteria). As well as assessing the socio-economic benefits for the community around ecotourism.

This research was conducted in 2022 with a research location in the coastal area of the Java Sea in the mangrove forest area of Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, Serang Regency, Banten Province. To answer the problem, namely regarding the application of ecotourism criteria and indicators in Mangrove Tourism Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, Serang District, Banten Province, namely using Formative Evaluation, namely a formative evaluation of the application of ecotourism principles and criteria. The population in this study were local people who were directly involved in ecotourism management and tourists who were visiting the Lontar village mangrove tourism at the time this research was carried out, then as many as 70 people participated in this study as a sample selected by convenience sampling. The data collection method uses a questionnaire instrument that uses a Likert

scale with a choice scale of 1-4. Then the total number of each aspect/criteria is calculated. The total score is interpreted into three categories, namely high with a value range of 81% -100%, medium with a value range of 61% -80%, and low if the value range is $\leq 60\%$. The data analysis technique in this study is using descriptive qualitative statistics.



Figure 1. Mangrove Ecotourism in Lontar Village

DISCUSSION

Evaluation result

The results of this study are evaluation activities related to the implementation of the 2009 Indonesian Ecotourism Criteria and Indicators (KIEI) on Mangrove tourism in Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, Serang Regency, Banten Province, each of the results of which can be seen in the following figure.

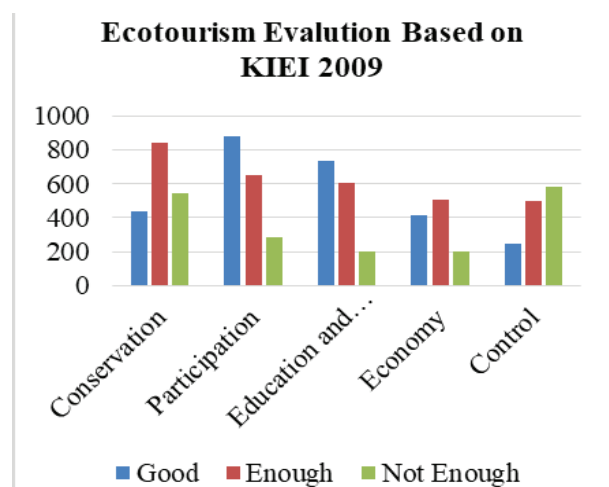


Figure 2. Respondents Answers to Ecotourism Evaluation Based on KIEI in 2009

Based on Figure 2 above, the results of the evaluation of the implementation of ecotourism activities based on KIEI I (Conservation) the highest number of answers is Enough with 843 out of a total of 1,820 with 26 questions to 70 tourist respondents, or 46.32% and are in the Enough Category. This shows that the manager has concern, responsibility and commitment to nature conservation and development that follows ecological principles. As a form of effort to minimize the negative impacts caused, the manager of mangrove tourism has made restrictions on the number of visitors according to the availability of facilities, facilities, and in accordance with the carrying capacity of the environment. This is done to protect mangrove conservation from the ignorant hands of visitors.

Referring to Figure 2, the results of the evaluation of the implementation of ecotourism activities based on KIEI II (Participation), the highest number of answers is Good with 881 out of a total of 1,820 with 26 questions for 70 tourist respondents, or 48.41% and are in the Good Category. These results can be explained that the principle of community participation has not been maximized (most are in the moderate category). However, basically the manager of the Lontar village mangrove natural tourism has tried to pay attention to the principle of community participation even though it has not been maximized. Lontar Village's mangrove ecotourism was founded on the initiative of a community who cares about the environment because the land continues to be eroded by abrasion. Then the manager fully came from the local community which then continued to develop so that they received assistance from the Serang Regency Environmental Service (DLH).

Referring to Figure 2, the results of the evaluation of the implementation of ecotourism activities based on KIEI III (Education and Recreation), the highest number of answers is Good with 735 out of a total of 1,540 with 22 questions for 70 tourist respondents, or 47.73% and are in the Good Category. This result can be explained that the principle of education is good so that managers of mangrove natural tourism need to be appreciated. The principle of education must continue to be developed or optimized. Especially the uniqueness of the Lontar area which still needs to be highlighted, because the average visitor comes from local tourists. Tourism managers must capture the interest of visitors by disseminating information about various things (advantages and potential) in the Lontar village mangrove tourism which are packaged in communicative and innovative forms and delivery techniques, because so far information has only been word of mouth.

Referring to Figure 2, the results of the evaluation of the implementation of ecotourism activities based on KIEI IV (Economy), the highest number of answers is Enough of 505 out of a total of 1,120 with 16 questions for 70 tourist respondents, or 45.19% and are in the Enough Category. The results of this study can be explained that the management of mangrove tourism has not provided the widest opportunity for the community to be involved as economic actors in mangrove ecotourism activities so that welfare has not increased significantly. Whereas according to Husamah & Hudha, (2018) ecotourism development must be able to provide benefits to the local community and become a driver of economic development in the region to ensure that areas that are still natural can develop

development that is balanced between the needs of environmental preservation and the interests of all parties.

Finally, based on Figure 2 above, the results of the evaluation of the implementation of ecotourism activities based on KIEI V (Control), the highest number of answers is Less as much as 584 out of a total of 1,330 with 19 questions for 70 tourist respondents, or 43.91% and are in the Less Category. This criterion is included in the principle of tourism where the results can be said to be not optimal. Managers need to pay attention to supporting facilities and tourism management needs to be improved.

Analysis of Socio-Economic Benefits of Mangrove Ecotourism in Lontar Village

An analysis of the socio-economic benefits for the people of Lontar Village with this mangrove ecotourism activity which adheres to the concept of Community Based Eco-Tourism is carried out by distributing questionnaires. Following are the results of research that has been conducted by researchers by asking 37 questions to respondents and have been analyzed using a Likert scale, as follows the total answers of respondents are presented in Figure 3.

Socio-Economic Benefits of Ecotourism

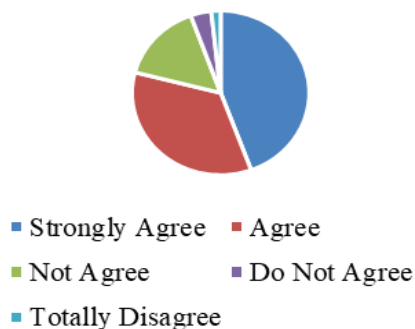


Figure 3. Respondents Answers on the Socio-Economic Benefits of Ecotourism for the Community

Based on the results of the research involving a sample of 70 respondents above, the existence of ecotourism can be categorized as successful in providing socio-economic benefits for the people of Lontar Village. Total SS answers (Strongly Agree) amounted to 1150 or 44.40%, meaning that the respondents strongly agreed to feel the socio-economic benefits of the existence of this Lontar Village Ecotourism. While the rest of the respondents agreed with the total answers S (Agree) amounted to 897 or 34.63%, KS (Disagree) totaled 401 or 15.49%, TS (Disagree) amounted to 98 or 3.78% and STS (Strongly Disagree) Agree) amounted to 44 or 1.70%.

The achievement of socio-economic indicators as the main aspect of developing the concept of Community Based Eco-Tourism in Lontar Village Ecotourism includes (1) There are community development funds through turnover obtained by the manager, (2) The creation of jobs, (3) There is community income from the tourism sector due to the opening new business space, (4) Improving the quality of life due to increased community income through tourism activities in Lontar Village, (5) Instilling a sense of pride in their village, (6) Providing space for young and old generations to work together in the development process and jointly carry out tourism activities in Lontar Village, and (7) Increased public awareness to be more conservative towards the environment.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted in 2022 with a research location in the coastal area of the Java Sea in the mangrove forest area of Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, Serang

Regency, Banten Province. To answer the problem, namely regarding the application of ecotourism criteria and indicators in Mangrove Tourism, Lontar Village, Tirtayasa District, Serang Regency

The results of the research and discussion show that in general five principles of community-based ecotourism have been attempted to be implemented in the management of mangrove tourism in Lontar Village even though the existing conditions show that many are still not optimal. Several criteria for each principle have not been implemented (still low), are being planned, are being pursued, and are being optimized. The principle of nature conservation has been considered or taken into consideration in the management of mangrove tourism. The principle of community participation has not been maximized even though the establishment of the Lontar village mangrove tour is entirely a community initiative (not the government) but the community's concern for abrasion has made this participation value the highest compared to other principles. The principle of education in managing mangrove tourism has not been maximized, it is necessary to increase information to the wider community. The economic principle in managing mangrove tourism is also not maximized because it has not provided the widest possible opportunity for the community to be involved as business actors in the local tourism industry. Then the control principle is also very minimal because the application of the tourism principle is still not optimal due to limited human resources. However, from all these evaluations, Lontar village mangrove tourism has provided

benefits both socially and economically to the surrounding community.

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