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Behind Rural Tourism: A Tool and a Panacea

By:

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ABSTRACT

After the issuance of the village law, villages in Indonesia are required to be economically independent by utilizing their potentials. This study aims to find out main potentials of villages in Banyumas to be developed into village-owned enterprise business units and explore the reasons why villages choose this potential as a village-owned enterprise business unit. This study uses a qualitative approach with data collection methods using focused group discussion and in-depth interviews. The results of this study indicate that of the seven villages participating in the research, six villages chose rural tourism as the main business unit of their village-owned enterprise. Most villages choose rural tourism because they consider that there has been a successful model of rural tourism enterprises in Indonesia and because rural tourism is considered as a solution to various problems.

Keywords: Village Law, Rural Tourism, Village-Owned Enterprise, Village Autonomy.

ABSTRAK

Setelah dikeluarkannya undang-undang desa, desa-desa di Indonesia dituntut untuk mandiri secara ekonomi dengan memanfaatkan potensinya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui potensi utama desa di Banyumas untuk dikembangkan menjadi unit bisnis badan usaha milik desa dan mengeksplorasi alasan mengapa desa memilih potensi ini sebagai unit bisnis badan usaha milik desa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode pengumpulan data menggunakan diskusi kelompok terfokus dan wawancara mendalam. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dari tujuh desa yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini, enam desa memilih pariwisata pedesaan sebagai unit bisnis utama dari badan usaha milik desa mereka. Sebagian besar desa memilih wisata pedesaan karena mereka menganggap bahwa telah ada model perusahaan pariwisata pedesaan yang sukses di Indonesia dan karena pariwisata pedesaan dianggap sebagai solusi untuk berbagai masalah.

Kata kunci: Undang-undang Desa, Wisata Pedesaan, Badan Usaha Milik Desa, Otonomi Desa.

INTRODUCTION

Village Law no. 6 of 2014 on Village (Village Law) becomes the forerunner of village development. Village development is an effort to improve the quality of life and for the greatest welfare of rural communities (Minister of Internal Affairs Regulation 114 of 2014). Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that in 2018, 13,20 % the composition of the poor is in the village, higher than in the city with 7, 02%. From these data we can know that the village is still far from prosperous. According to Swasono (2009), the best and effective way to overcome poverty is to eradicate unemployment. Eradicating unemployment can be done by changing the position of the poor and unemployed who were originally a burden (liability) transformed into assets (productive-agents) that contribute added value to the country. Transformation into these assets can be done by empowering rural communities.

Empowerment of village communities according to Permendagri 114 of 2014 is an effort to develop community independence and welfare by increasing knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, abilities, awareness, and utilizing resources through the establishment of policies, programs, activities and mentoring that are in accordance with the essence of the problem and priority needs villagers. One program that is expected to be able to build economically independent rural communities is by establishing a Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). BUMDes is a business entity whose entire or part of its capital is owned by the village through direct participation from separated village assets in order to manage assets, services and other businesses for the greatest welfare of the village community (Permendesa No. 4 of 2015).

From the statements above, it can be seen that BUMDes is one of the pillars for creating independent, empowered and prosperous villages in accordance with the mandate of the Village Law. The establishment of BUMDes becomes crucial because it involves the independence of the village economy in the future. If it is not well planned, it is not impossible for BUMDes to become an unproductive institution and cannot support the independence of the village in the future.

One sector that is often used as a business unit of BUMDes is rural tourism. Rural tourism has become the backbone of the economy in a number of villages in the world (Ezeuduji, 2015., Garau, 2015., Sharpley, R and Jepsen, D, 2011) 2006). Rural tourism began to develop in Europe in the 1980s, followed by developments in other continents, including Asia (Garau, 2015). Although it is recognized that it can boost the local economy, some research found that rural tourism is not a sustainable income for the region. Garau (2015) found that rural tourism did not sustain in several regions in Italy. However, some villages in Indonesia develop rural tourism to support village independence. This rural tourism is managed by BUMDes and become a source of income for the village.

This paper aims to find out village potentials to be developed into BUMDes business units in Banyumas Regency, Central Java, and to explore the reason behind why villages choose the potentials to become BUMDes main business units. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with methods of collecting data using in-depth interviews and focus group discussion (FGD).

Village Law No. 6/2014 is the unity of the legal community which have boundaries that are authorized to regulate and manage the affairs of government, the interests of local communities based on community initiatives, the right of the origin and/or traditional rights recognized and respected in the system of government of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). According to Wijayanto, I. H., Agus S and Sukanto. (2013), by encouraging ownership out of community service and submit it to a higher level of bureaucracy, would actually weaken and undermine the community. McKnight argues that the community better understand the problems they face, the community will not only provide a 'service' but resolve the problem, and the community is more flexible and creative than a fat bureaucracy. With a variety of these advantages, the village as a community is believed to be the driving force of national development in Indonesia.

According to the Internal Affairs Minister Regulation (Peraturan Menteri Dalam Negeri/Permendagri) No. 114/2014, rural development is an effort to improve the quality of life to the maximum well-being of rural communities. Development is done in the village by participation, which means that the management system in rural development and rural areas is coordinated by the Village Head by promoting unity, kinship and mutual cooperation in order to bring peace and social justice. In building the village, the village community empowerment is also required. Empowerment of rural communities according to Permendagri 114/2014 is an attempt to develop the independence and well-being of society by increasing knowledge, attitudes, skills, behavior, ability, awareness, and utilize resources through the establishment of policies, programs, activities, and assistance in accordance with the problem and the priority that villagers need.

One effort to build an economically independent village community is by establishing a Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). BUMDes is a business entity whose entire or major part of its capital is owned by village through direct participation from separated village assets in order to manage assets, services and other businesses for the greatest welfare of the village community (Permendesa No. 4 of 2015).

According to Hamzah (2015), BUMDes is an economic institution as well as a social institution that aims to foster social capital of rural communities. The social capital mentioned is the existence of village people participation in village development. According to Handayani (2009), BUMDes was established by referring to clear objectives, namely providing services in productive businesses for groups of poor rural people, reducing the practice of *tengkulak* (bad middlemen), creating equal opportunities, and increasing income for the village community.

Rural tourism is part of the transformation of the role of rural communities today. According to Gartner (2005), in addition to the experience of seeing and visiting the countryside, there must be other benefits obtained by visitors and rural communities through village tourism. According to Mieczkowski (1995), rural tourism consists of two types: mass tourism and alternative tourism. Mass tourism refers to rural tourism which allows very many people to enjoy it at one time (for example: waterfalls, water parks, beaches, etc.). Alternative tourism refers to the emphasis on contact and understanding of the way of life and environment of rural communities.

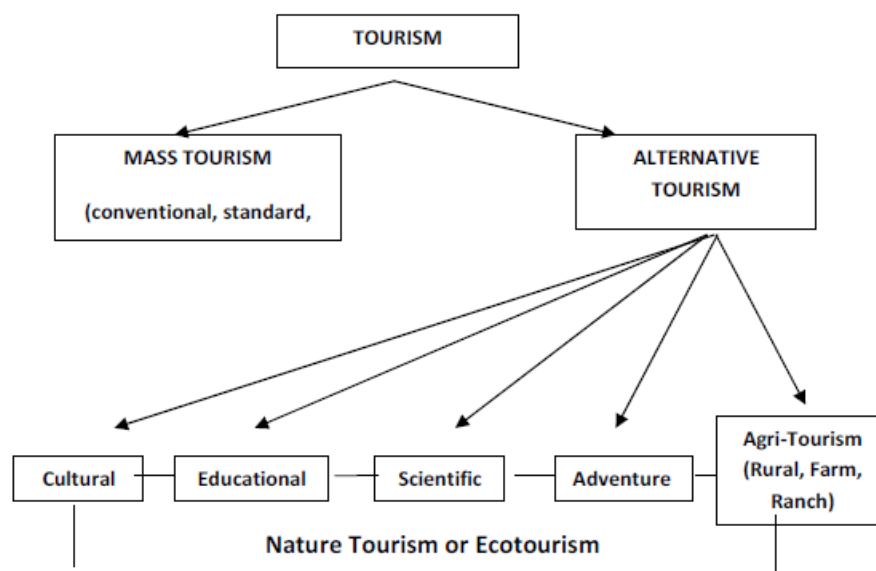


Figure 1. Types of Rural Tourism (Mieczkowski, 1995)

Rural tourism integrates four pillars of village development according to Euracademy (2003), namely: human, economic, environmental and ideas. The term 'rural development' has only been driven by national needs (food, electricity, water, and other things) without regard to the needs of rural communities themselves. Gartner (2005) stated that there must be a paradigm shift that rural areas only become barns for the consumption of urban communities. According to Euracademy (2003) the role of farmers in the village is not only as food producers but also as entrepreneurs, providers of added value to the local economy, providers of tourist attractions, as well as carers of natural resources and cultural heritage.

The result of the study from Irshad (2010) found that in both developed and developing countries, tourism is a tool to increase the economic activity of a region. According to Euracademy (2003) tourism will provide tangible benefits to the community, economy and environment if it is integrated with other aspects of rural life. According to Gartner (2005), in addition to the experience of seeing and visiting the countryside, there must be other benefits obtained by visitors and rural communities through rural tourism.

ANALYTICAL METHOD

This study used qualitative approach with data collection techniques using focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), qualitative approach is able to provide an understanding of the phenomenon that happens thoroughly with descriptive depiction in

the form of language and words. The first step in data collection was using the FGD. Seven villages were involved in two different FGDs. Each village was represented by five elements: village government, village-owned enterprise, village consultative body (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa/BPD), family welfare education (Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/PKK), and youth organization (Karang Taruna). There were some steps that should be completed in this FGD:

1. Each village should make a list which consist of ten village potentials
2. From those ten potentials, they have to shorten the list become three main village potentials that could be developed into BUMDes business unit
3. From those three, the village representatives and the facilitators (Bapermades officers and the researchers) have to decide a possible BUMDes that can be developed
4. Each village should link village vision and mission statement with the potential BUMDes business unit that they have chosen before.

After FGD completed, there were in-depth interviews for some selected villages to explore the reason why they choose certain potential as BUMDes business unit. The villages selected were based on their preferences in choosing rural tourism as their main BUMDes business. The FGDs were facilitated by Badan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa/Bapermades Kabupaten Banyumas. In total, there were four people involved in this FGD as representatives from seven villages.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the first step of FGD, each village makes a list consisting of their ten village potentials. In making the list, each representative in the village should discuss based on their village data. After identifying ten potentials, they have to choose three (or four) main potentials which can be developed into a BUMDes business unit. This phase was challenging for the village representatives, because they have to eliminate many potentials which cannot be developed or need extra efforts to be developed into BUMDes business unit. Three potentials chosen should be integrated each other, so as to enable them to be developed into one possible BUMDes. Furthermore, the village representatives and the facilitators decide possible BUMDes that can be developed from the potentials. The finding of this FGD phase is quite interesting because almost all villages involved in the FGD (except Sigalung) want to develop village tourism under their BUMDes. Table 1 displays village potentials and possible BUMDes obtained from FGD.

The FGD was followed by in-depth interview to six villages to explore the reason behind the choice of alternative rural tourism as their BUMDes. The results of interviews with six villages showed similar results regarding the reasons for choosing rural tourism. These villages choose rural tourism for two things: (1) There are real examples of villages in Indonesia that are considered successful in developing rural tourism as village potential, (2) Plenty of natural resources in Banyumas, such as waterfall, rice field, and plantation. Some Village representatives refer directly to one village that is famous in Indonesia because of its rural tourism:

"Like (Umbul) Ponggok in Klaten, they can earn billions of rupiah from their village tourism every year. It is fantastic for village level"

BUMDes Tirta Mandiri in Ponggok Village, Polanharjo Subdistrict, Klaten Regency, is indeed virally reported in various mass media and is one of the main destinations of BUMDes comparative studies in Indonesia. This village-owned enterprise records revenues of IDR 14 billion in 2017 (Tempo, 2018). The main source of income for BUMDes comes from Umbul Ponggok which offers the sensation of diving in freshwater ponds. Many villages in Indonesia that are inspired by the success of Umbul Ponggok make a big income. However, apart from the currently booming village tourism, many villages consider that the village's natural potential in Banyumas is the main capital that should be managed by BUMDes.

"Banyumas is a country of one thousand waterfalls (negeri seribu curug). So many villages have potential waterfall. This must be utilized for tourism", said the representative of Pancasan Village.

Table 1. Focus Group Discussion Result

No	Village	Main Potential	Possible Village-Owned Enterprises
1.	Banjarpanepen	Waterfall Hill Pengaritan Pengaritan Watu Jonggol and River Cawang	Cultural tourism
2.	Karangsalam	Waterfall Agro education Home stay	Educational tourism
3.	Pancasan	Taman Tirta Alami Tourism Integrated Mina Wisata Industrial location (Bima cement)	Adventure tourism
4.	Pliken	Natural pesticides (grant from FAO) Flowers Fisheries (Gurame) Tempe	Agricultural and educational tourism
5.	Piasa Kulon	Organic industry (rice field, soap, and virgin coconut oil) Panembahan (religious place) Bathing place	Agricultural and cultural tourism
6.	Sibalung	Agriculture Home industry (broom/tempe) Village sports area	Home-industry based tourism
7.	Susukan	Village park Decorative Plants Robusta Coffee	Educational tourism

Garau (2015) found that rural tourism is always constrained by its sustainability. Many villages are willing to develop rural tourism, but they have not focused on developing it. As a result, rural tourism usually booms at the beginning, but the declines after several years. We confirm this in in-depth interviews. The results were surprising because in fact most of these villages did not have a clear vision, mission, and purpose to become a village tourism destination. They consider that rural tourism is the most feasible by looking at existing trends.

The representative of Susukan village argued, *"We do not have village vision and mission's statement, there is only a village head's vision and mission statement. So it is not yet known whether rural tourism will be seriously developed. But it looks like it will indeed be developed, because there are examples of what works with this (rural tourism)"*.

Nevertheless, there is a village like Susukan, which does have a road map to become a rural tourism village especially in edu-tourism. This road map to become an edu-tourism has been known by various village stakeholders, and they together make it happen. Another village, such as Pancasan, has also received huge income from their water-based rural tourism.

From the results of further interviews, it can be seen that most villages that choose to develop rural tourism under BUMDes consider that rural tourism is a tool to get large income for the village. The assumption that rural tourism is the most appropriate tool for obtaining income is strengthened by information from village representatives who continue to refer to villages that have managed to earn large amounts of income through rural tourism. On the other hand, the village considers rural tourism as panacea. Panacea analogy is used to refer to the notion of the village that rural tourism as the main business unit of the BUMDes is believed to be able to solve all kinds of situations (huge village income, the performance of the village government which shows progress, abundant natural resources, relatively easy management on a local scale).

The tourism in rural areas concept is not only based on holiday concept, furthermore, it can be seen from tourist perspective (demand) and organizer/rural perspective (supply). The needs from both parties determine rural tourism (Ayazlar & Ayazlar, 2015). Lane (2009) found that people nowadays are more care about health and well-beng, thus they want to escape from their routines and experiencing rural life. Ayazlar & Ayazlar (2015) stated that rural tourism is more interesting than mass tourism for tourists from big cities.

According to Mieczkowski (1995), there are two types of tourism; mass/traditional tourism and alternative tourism. Most villages in Banyumas apparently choose the later form, alternative tourism. There are several types of alternative tourism will be adopted by villages in Banyumas such as cultural tourism (Banjarpanepen, Piasa Kulon), adventure tourism (Pancasan), educational tourism (Pliken, Karang Salam), and agricultural tourism (Susukan, Pliken, and Piasa Kulon). According to Euracademy (2003), rural tourism integrates four pillars of village development such as human, economic, environmental and ideas. Villages in Banyumas try to adopt these elements in their planned rural tourism. This finding also streghten by research from Dashper (2014) which found that more and more urban people start to search relaxation and leisure activities in rural areas. Some traditional activities offered by such agricultural, educational or cultural tourism will fulfil their needs as well as stated by other previous research (Ayazlar & Ayazlar, 2015; Lane, 2009; Falak, Chiun, & Wee, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Rural tourism as a business unit of BUMDes is the main choice for most villages participating in the FGD in Banyumas Regency, Central Java. The reason behind this choice is because villages assume that rural tourism is a tool as well as panacea for village. As a tool, rural tourism is considered an effective revenue generator. As panacea, rural tourism is considered as the best option to manage several things, such as village income needs, key indicators for village government performance, abundant natural resources in Banyumas, and easy management in local level. Despite there is a lack in terms of sustainability concept for rural tourism in Banyumas villages, village elements remain committed to develop rural tourism.

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